Imperial Daydreaming:
Disentangling Contemporary Ottoman Nostalgia in Turkey

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Preface

The master-poet Necip Fazil tells us; "Understanding Abdülhamid[1] is understanding everything… Yet, let's face this reality; Sultan Abdülhamid, who has marked his era by being the last emperor and the last universal sovereign, has been ignored, and even besmeared…In the eyes of many intellectuals, authors, academics and historians Abdülhamid was the head of a so called thirty-three-year despotic regime. According to some, Abdülhamid was the opposite of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal, he was the "other" of the Republican Regime. Insulting Abdülhamid, and ignoring his legacy became a litmus test for loyalty to the Republic. For these types, making a few positive remarks about Abdülhamid is more than enough to be deemed an enemy of the Republic…At a time when you could insult Abdülhamid with impunity, a great poet like Necip Fazil was unfairly imprisoned. A marginal group still holds these bigoted views. A certain group of people keeps insisting on starting our history in 1923. These types still try to sever us from our roots, from our ancient values. A circle led by the leader of the opposition party still sees hostility to our [Ottoman] ancestors as the sole criteria of being loyal to the Republic. According to the likes of these people the Turkish Republic is a rootless novel formation without a history. They claim that neither the Seljuks, nor the Ottomans who have brought order to the world are part of Turkey's inheritance. Again, according to this bunch, Ottoman sultans lived in luxury, glory, and debauchery, they were lavish and imprudent. Our country has suffered under this Westernized mentality which presented these wrong, fabricated and sick narratives as our history.

My dear brothers, history is not only a nation's past, but it's a compass to its future, it's a nation's memory. It's impossible for a nation to survive without it! For this reason, nations with a mere history of few hundred years or less strive to fabricate a glorious one. But, us, we can't seem to claim and protect our thousands of years of history… We can't be like the likes of those [in this country] who look away from their history… It's the biggest treason to prison a thousand-year history to the narrow confines of a century. Without a doubt every nation's history has debacles molded with tears and blood along with glorious victories. Because what makes a nation and gives it character is the entirety of its past. We, without discriminating between events, are proud of and triumph in our history. And this history is beyond anything any other nation can write. Praise be God, we own a history like this. Yet, we don't forget to take the necessary lessons while we revel in our history. Our most important reference—what we remember on every possible occasion—is the important verses from Yahya Kemal Beyatlı: "We are the future rooted in the past." …We should stop seeing the Ottoman Empire and Turkey in opposition!

Look at this palace we are in, it is a monument from Abdülhamid, and can you believe, the edict to dethrone him was signed in this very palace he himself built… Can you imagine such treason? Well, types such as—well, we know who they are—have come and gone and nobody is commemorating them anymore. But, Praise be God, now Sultan Abdülhamid is commemorated in this very palace. And God allowing, he will always be remembered in this palace. I am grateful to TRT, the TV channel, especially for the TV Series "The Throne," the historical series on Abdülhamid's reign. Truly, that series should be immediately exported to the Gulf, Europe and other places—granted we do the dubbing ourselves…The Turkish Republic is a continuum of the Ottoman Empire. Of course, the borders, the form of governance, and the governing documents have changed. But, the essence. and the spirit is the same.

[1] 19th Century Ottoman Sultan. See Chapter 2 for extensive information on his reign.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the president of Turkey, gave this speech in 2018 on the centennial of the death of 19th Century Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid. The commemoration was hosted in Yıldız Palace, a modern complex ordered by Abdülhamid himself, and built by an Italian architect—away from the coast as the Sultan feared a naval attack. The title of the gathering— "Understanding Abdülhamid on the Centennial of his Death" takes inspiration from the Islamist poet Necip Fazil's advice: "Understanding Abdülhamid is Understanding Everything." Understanding "everything," is an unsurmountable task, yet this speech is a good place to start understanding Turkey's nostalgic obsession with its imperial past.

When Turkey was founded in 1923, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it severed its ties with the Ottoman past, designating it as a short hiccup in an eternal Turkish past dating back to the time immemorial, located in the mythical Central Asian Steppes. In this densely-packed speech Erdogan is declaring, once again, that the vision which ignores Turkey's Ottoman past and confines Turkey to a mere century is finally dead, no longer able to distort the past. Turkey is not a twentieth-century creation, but a continuum of glorious and triumphant states, an heir to a past which simply cannot be constrained. This dissertation is on this spillage—the nostalgia for the Ottoman in contemporary Turkey.

As much as Erdogan insists on ownership of this past, it is not his. Hence, my first point of entry is the 2011 TV Series *Magnificent Century*, with its luxurious, entertaining and titillating depiction of Sultan Suleiman II's 16th century imperial Harem, full of powerful women, intrigue, and romance. *Magnificent Century* is the epitome of

"Ottomania," the popular infatuation of the early 2010s with the Ottoman past as a flavor of inspiration for entertainment and consumption, celebrated in TV shows, restaurants, and all sorts of tourism. After opening with an analysis of the core emotional sensibilities of light-hearted Ottomania, I move on to the very different representations of the Empire I call "neo-Ottomanism," the state-led nostalgia for belligerent Ottoman triumph and glory conveyed so powerfully by Erdogan in the speech above. My ethnographic discourse analysis of the Conquest of Constantinople Rally features another honored Ottoman ancestor claimed by Erdogan—the 15th Century Mehmed the Conqueror.

In the subsequent chapter, the conquest of Constantinople becomes more tangible, enacted in an interactive museum setting at the heart of modern-day Istanbul and experienced by visitors from every walk of life. Lastly, I further rewind the Ottoman clock back to its 12th Century humble beginnings by putting *Resurrection Ertuğrul*—the state-endorsed Ottoman TV series produced by the "praiseworthy" TRT— under scrutiny. I argue that neo-Ottomanism conquered Ottomania and created new media in its masculine and stern image, which alienated the followers of *Magnificent Century*—the ex-nostalgics who left the past altogether, as the all-encompassing spillage of the Ottoman suffocated them, making them the guardians of the present.

At every site of Ottoman Nostalgia, I have two agendas. First, to show that nostalgia is not one singular emotion but a multifaceted amalgam created by TV series, commemorations and rallies, and lived by and experienced by people. Hence, I travelled to six different cities in Turkey for in-depth interviews, investigating if and how people were interpellated by different inflections of Ottoman nostalgia. Similarly, I spent months

at the *Museum of Conquest* to observe how feelings induced in a nostalgic machine become meaningful national emotions for and by my informants.

My second agenda is to argue that nostalgia is a productive social force. Drawing from Yahya Kemal Beyatli—like Erdogan does—I see nostalgia as "the future rooted in the past." Far more than a sentimental backward lingering, nostalgia is a global power which erects cities in its own image, bulldozes forests to build magnificent Ottoman style hotels, and mobilizes masses to follow a leader who will "bring it back." Thus, I looked very carefully at the political discourse and public spectacles which this nostalgia legitimizes.

"A group of people insists on dating back our history to 1923," says Erdogan. This statement exemplifies a few characteristics of the President's discourse. The expression "a group of people," used interchangeably with phrases like "these types," or "you know who I am talking about," hails the audience into a group of belonging by calling out its antithesis. According to the president, this vague group, which the audience is expected to recognize immediately, does not respect the expansive history of Turkey and insists on taking the declaration of the regime change from a monarchy to the republic as the foundational moment of Turkey. "These types," certainly do not hold the same values as the audience. Throughout my fieldwork, though, I rarely came across a person who wanted to ignore the Ottoman past in its entirety. I talked to people who were tired of politics oversaturated with the Ottoman past, but few wanted to deny its importance. The president's insistence of relying on a populist discourse, which deems AKP as the provider of "true history," may not represent the truth, but it eventually makes it by creating boundaries between the "grandchildren of the Ottoman," and the

others. My project brings to the surface these tectonic discourses of Ottoman nostalgia used to build symbolic boundaries through Turkish society.

CHAPTER 1

From Sickness to Remedy: The Sociological Journey of Nostalgia

My journey with Ottoman nostalgia started on one of the many means of public transportation in Istanbul. I could have been riding a bus, a minibus, or the metro. At this point I don't remember. What I remember vividly, though, is becoming aware of a gripping billboard repeated across the cityscape. An imperial family gazed out at the passersby, like the characters in European paintings whose eyes follow the viewer. With the magnificently crowned sultan carefully positioned at the center, surrounded by concubines and statesmen, the billboard almost came alive, exuding luxury, pomp, and power. At his right, the sultan's mother stood wrapped in expensive fabrics, sternly demanding the audience's submission to her son. Their piercing gaze finally demanded my attention, and I asked myself: "What is it about, this popular fascination with the Ottoman empire?" My musings from the bus eventually became a research question, which I have followed ever since. The TV series promoted on those billboards, *Magnificent Century,* shook the Turkish public beginning in 2011, and I use it as my first point of entry to the universe of texts and material culture composing Ottoman nostalgia. *Magnificent Century* is situated in the wider popular cultural fascination with the Ottoman Empire; *Ottomania* as it is called (Ergin and Karakaya 2017). Yet, Ottomania is not the end of this story.

As I became immersed in the subject, it became inevitable that I needed also to understand neo-Ottomanism, the state-dominated face of Ottoman nostalgia, with its

claim at sincerity, masculinity and glory. Neo-Ottomanism, which has become the close companion of authoritarian populism, is exemplified in the Conquest rallies, the Panorama Museum of Conquest, and Turkey's now-questionable foreign policy agenda. Neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania both share an affinity to spectacle, but could not be more different when it comes to the genre of choice, affiliated emotions, and gendered boundaries. To this end, President Erdogan has made it clear that he dislikes *Magnificent Century*; "[Suleiman's] ancestors spent their life waging war on horseback, not entertaining themselves in a harem." The contested relationship between these two forms of nostalgias—the commercialized and the state-led—in Turkey is the subject matter of this dissertation. Yet before entering this complex terrain, we have to map out the broader outlines of nostalgia itself, bringing inter-disciplinary insights to delineate it as a sociological phenomenon.

Nostalgia was first coined by Hofer in 1688, whose aim was to describe the pathologically emotional state that people find themselves in when they are far from home (Boym 2001). A combination of two Greek words, *nostos*: homecoming, and *algos*: pain, Hofer's neologism explained what was perceived as a pathological form of homesickness in the 17th century. I define nostalgia as a social force that emerged with the intensification of the perceived loss of a better condition—a place, community, nature, enchantment and innocence. Nostalgia as a social force was unorganized at its 17th century beginnings, and gradually became an organized collective effort, increasingly under the control of the state. Contrary to the commonsense connotation of harkening back, lingering, and regress, with the inherent and quintessential component of desire to "take back," and "bring back," the lost state, nostalgia actively shapes the world

as we know it. With its promise of reenchanting the contemporary, it has shaped boundaries, helped build new nation-states, and erected cities in its own dewy image.

Today, keeping some of its initial connotations, nostalgia is actually manifold, in its object – groups of people who yearn – and the emotions that go in it. As the Turkish case will highlight, even the same object can have different groups of nostalgics, who can find themselves competing over what feelings are appropriate, and what the yearned-for past "really" looked like. Hence, one of the contributions of this dissertation to the study of nostalgia is that it is not singular, but can be manifested in very different emotions. It is also produced in very different ways, at times politically engineered, and in other instances, conceived, celebrated, and sold as commodity. In this sense, Trump's "Make America Great Again" is different than *Mad Men*'s nostalgia for the sixties, and so is their emotional complexion.

This dissertation follows Svetlana Boym's footsteps in the endeavor to rid nostalgia from the dismissive popular and academic stigma attached to it; not to redeem it and declare it harmless, but to show the nuances, its layered nature, and to bring in a more complex understanding of emotions that go into nostalgia's making. While Boym declared the persistence of nostalgia in 2001, the 2016 US Presidential Election seemed to catch everybody off guard. How could the nostalgia for a "great America" win the elections? Brexit's "Take Back Control," and Modi's "Hindu Revival" are among many other examples that made journalists announce nostalgia and its close companion, populism, the contemporary political ills (Karakaya 2018). Without jumping to conclusions, we need to understand why it persists, with whom it resonates, and the ways it can exist both within and outside of immediate politics. Before I dive deep in the

Turkish relationship with the Ottoman past, I will provide a heuristic of the forms of nostalgia, as we cannot understand this case without situating it in the transcultural historical context.

I argue that nostalgia as a world-historical force, whose emotional power helped form the post-Westphalian nation-state dominated world order, and keeps contributing to its maintenance. Theorists have argued that it emerged with the changing conception of time (Koselleck 1998; Lowenthal 1996), and that it is coeval with modernity (Boym 2001; Fritzsche 2004). They have assessed it as a reaction to (Bonnett 2010; Glazer 2005) or as a tool of capitalism, that is, as a boost to mediated consumer culture (Appadurai 1996; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Boltanski and Esquerre 2015; De Groot 2016; Lizardi 2015; Niemeyer 2014; Stewart 1984). Historian Thomas Dodman (2018) accounted its transformation from a disease entity, to a cultural phenomenon. Most recently scholars drew attention to its uncanny alliance with politics, specifically nationalism and populism (Karakaya 2018; Kenny 2017; Stanley 2018).

This heuristic brings a sociological lens to the evolution of nostalgia. With the proper distance, most things show a pattern, the sum of which Weber would recognize as an ideal type. In this heuristic, nostalgia is a social force which has a strong emotional component, a core sensibility. I assemble infrastructure, emotional governance, core sensibility, and temporal character of desire into one model, showing how the interworking of these elements build the social force of nostalgia.

I identify the first nostalgic form is *Romantic Nostalgia*. Second is *Spectacular Nostalgia*. And lastly, *Cosmopolitan Nostalgia*. Each form of nostalgia has a high point, that it is more predominantly observed. Within each era, each form of nostalgia congeals

into an ideal type, yet these forms are not constrained by the specific era in which they were born, or mostly observed. Historical high periods—corresponding time periods—depend on the case one is observing.

Infrastructure: entails structural enablers, which are the elements that make a particular form of nostalgia possible (or impossible). The rise of a specific type of nostalgia depends on the infrastructure, or the political economy, which comprises the resources that enable the emergence, dissemination, and regulation of feelings that comprise the corresponding form of nostalgia. Primary Carriers, the main actors in creating nostalgias, are part of the infrastructure. A key here is to answer: What is the relationship between the state and nostalgia? How does the state fit in the trajectory of nostalgia, and is there a form where it has complete command over nostalgia? Why and how does nostalgia prove to be a powerful consent-creating mechanism for the nation-state?

Core Sensibility: defines the corresponding emotional amalgam, the structure of feeling in each form (Williams 1977), as the feeling structure has the ability to shape collective action based on the characteristics of the contributing emotions. This aspect highlights the fact that different nostalgias have different emotions at their core; nostalgia is not a singular emotion. I find the emotional component particularly revealing in unpacking the relationship between structure and agency, since the core sensibility shapes the individual's subjective experience of nostalgia, down to the corporeal aspects of feeling. As emotions can be powerful indicators of the tension between the structure and agency, they can inform the repertoires of action in a given point. For instance, nostalgia imbued with melancholia motivates different actions from nostalgia giddy with pride.

Emotional Governance: The view on the nature of emotions in a given nostalgic form matters in determining the management and regulation of emotions. Are emotions to be feared, or seen through a frame of rationality? Is there a Cartesian understanding of emotions that juxtaposes them against rational action? Which emotions get suppressed, which ones get heightened? In other words, how are emotions regulated? How does this, then, affect the regulation of nostalgia? Who has the capacity to regulate it? How is this regulation interpreted, implemented and endorsed by the subject? Emotional governance lies at the intersection between infrastructure and subject, and highly involves the process of meaning-making, thus enabling analysis in two interrelated levels. The tension between structure and agency is most likely to be "tamed" at an intervention at this level.

Temporal Character of Desire: defines the typical objects of nostalgia in relation to time. As the kernels of nostalgia are loss, longing, and desire, the heuristic lays out the typical objects of desire, considering where they are located in time. What is the nature of time here? Nostalgia is affiliated with perceived ephemerality, but how ephemeral is time associated with nostalgia and what is the object/notion thought to be lost? Is it untarnished nature? Or is it a period of conquest? What do individuals long and strive for? How do people see the past?

Table 1 – The forms of Nostalgia			
	Romantic Nostalgia 18th and 19th century	**Spectacular Nostalgia** 1915-1970	**Cosmopolitan Nostalgia** 1970-
ORGANIZATION	Scattered, unorganized, bottom up	Unified, incorporated in nation, organized, top down	Ubiquitous, organized, multiple origins
1INFRASTRUCTURE (carrier groups)	Artists Young revolutionaries	Nation-state Culture Industry/Mass Culture	Popular Culture Heritage Industry
2 EMOTIONAL GOVERNANCE (intersection between infrastructure and subjectivity)	Emotions channeled in art, mobilized by the aspiring revolutionaries.	New nation-state now cultivates, governs and maintains effervescence	Emotional individuation Consumer culture/Self-Help and Therapeutic culture (Pop-psychology, culture, consumption)
3 CORE SENSIBILITY (nostalgic subjectivity)	Melancholic yearning, aestheticized sadness, sorrow, bitter-sweet, hopeless love, heartache, vengeful, courageous	Strength, awe serious, proud, strong, in awe, excited, effervescent, reasonable (no more melancholia)	Playfulness, lighthearted enjoyment, wanderlust, romantic-comedic, individual reflexivity, curiosity, mindfulness, non-attachment
4 TEMPORAL CHARACTER OF DESIRE (typical objects of nostalgia in relation to time)	Highly retrospective. Rustic life, lost places, long lost love, youth aspirational national identity	Fusion of past and present draws on past symbols to construct a proud expansive present and future	Less essential, attachment to multiple pasts

Historicizing Nostalgia

The Pathological Prelude

The Pathological Prelude is my term for nostalgia's beginnings as pathological longing. Nostalgia here was deemed a disease of homesickness felt by the most mobile folks, the soldiers who fought away from home. By the mid-18th century, nostalgia as sickness was accounted for across armies in Europe (Dodman 2018). During the early years of the French revolutionary wars, soldiers deployed far from home were diagnosed with nostalgia – they even died from it. This pathological version was most widespread in military formations that combined extreme disciplinary mass conscription with a program premised on emergent ideals of patriotism, civic equality, and individual autonomy (Dodman 2018). As this form was observed on soldiers away from home, the primary carriers/mnemonic entrepreneurs were medical doctors acting as the translators of this condition to statesmen, and generals whose best interest lies at securing the smooth operation of armies which depended on motivated soldiers.

The core sensibility here entails intense sorrow, hankering, and visceral pain. The temporal character of desire was a "homely time," that was not organized around army drills, battle preparations and wartime deployment, but that was domestic and organic. This emergent form scared the empire-states, as it endangered the functioning of armies. Hence, European states dealt with this ur-form of nostalgia rather ambivalently, treating it like a sickness with triggers and cures like bagpipes and cowbells, or seeing it as a feminized yoke to progress. This pathological approach to nostalgia is reflective of a time when European societies grappled with managing "unruly passions and tame unbridled imaginations in both individuals and the masses" (Dodman 2018:29). Thus, when it

comes to emotional governance, this particular nostalgia was seen as an obstruction to a reasoned and organized army, and medical doctors were the intermediary actors between the institutions of army and the state.

Romantic Nostalgia

The French army medical corps' efforts at establishing nostalgia as a disease entity in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars actually helped it spread outside of the military (Dodman 2018:126). The state had an immense role in removing the painful, acute aspects of nostalgia at this 17th century medical highpoint. In time, the clinical form of nostalgia gave way to a different form: Romantic Nostalgia. Victorian novels, German folk songs, and romantic music started featuring nostalgic themes, an indication that nostalgia outgrew its pathological beginnings to enter the literary circles, even if it was not yet completely organized and vernacularized. Romantic nostalgia contributed immensely to patriotism and national spirit, which engulfed many European countries at the time, and spread to the world through imperial activities, and intellectual exchange. The French Revolution provided the vocabulary – or ideals of nationalism – while romanticism as an artistic movement became its great companion, especially in providing the set of emotions in this form. Greek nationalists in the Ottoman Empire, or the Venezuelan independence movement led by Simon Bolivar, are quintessential examples of this form.

Artists were one of the main carriers of this form of nostalgia. In Europe, the historical highpoint of this type of nostalgia occurred between the late 18th and the 19th century. Here, patriotic feelings became expressed through the love of nature, folk tales, religious tropes, and myths. Literature and music which drew on the powerful creative

heritage of the common people—language and folk songs—culturally expressed and fostered the first wave of nationalism (Hobsbawm 1962:303). Romantic Nostalgia, along with the Pathological Prelude, was very much contemporary with modernity, and was a result of a tremendous change in the perception of time and space. In this romantic beginning, the temporal character of desire was highly retrospective and rather disorganized – its object relatively scattered – and was translated by artists to be experienced vernacularly. Nostalgia, here, gradually became less pathologic, and came to be experienced through romantic literature with its pastoral themes, subjects of longing and loss, and love. For example, Balzac wrote to his mistress how much he felt "*nostalgie*" for his study at home when travelling in Europe, Alexander von Humboldt—a Berliner—felt nostalgic for Paris, and Baudelaire mused about "nostalgia for unknown lands" (Dodman 2018:126). Similarly, the British Poet Lord Byron was a staunch follower of the Philhellenic movement and was a big influence in the Greek independence.

The link between public affairs and the arts proved to be an important element of infrastructure in developing national consciousness and movements of national liberation and unification (Hobsbawm 1962: 303). This collaboration was fueled by and fueled nostalgia, and helped change the world order[2]. The revival or birth of national literary cultures in Germany, Russia, Poland, the Scandinavian countries and elsewhere coincided with – and was usually the first manifestation of – the assertion of the cultural supremacy of the vernacular language and of the native people, against a cosmopolitan aristocratic

[2] I am not in any way arguing nostalgia is the sole source of change, I argue that it is one very important factor in need of sociological scrutiny, which contributed to the overdetermination of the world order.

culture which employed a foreign language (303). The asocial bourgeois world caused a "longing for the lost unity of man and nature," and left people "homeless and lost in the universe as 'alienated' beings" (311). This led the romantic German poets to search for salvation in the "idyllic pre-industrial little towns that dotted the dream-landscapes, which they described as more irresistibly than they have ever been described by anyone else" (311-312). The wanderlust in search for the symbolic "blue flower" ruled this epoch. Young men of the times left home to pursue the endless quest for the 'blue flower' or merely to wander forever, homesick and singing Eichendorff lyrics or Schubert songs. (312). Intellectuals of the German Empire, such as Eichendorff, and Wilhelm Müller, who wrote about spiritual wanderlust, helped consolidate what constitutes "being German," during its short but very powerful half-century as a world power.

In other places, ethnic groups took up the bursting emotions translated by artists, and revolutionaries mobilized to form their own nation-states, looking back to their past before colonization, occupation, or imperial rule. This caused immense tension between the empire, local rule, and bubbling nationalisms aided by the French Revolution. In other words, the romantic nostalgia of birthing nations caused headaches for, and turmoil in, the empire states. The typical objects of desire here were the idyllic land before the "foreign invasion." Literary themes reflected this friction between empire, nationalism, and foreign rule. Tales like *Wilhelm Tell, Goetz and Egmont, Cleopatra and Sophonisbe* all revolve around communities trying to preserve local autonomy and tradition against an empire (Kontje 2018). In Germany, intellectuals like Lessing, Herder, and Goethe lamented the imitation of French fashion, and wanted to rid the foreign influence. Fichte especially emphasized "Germans being an indigenous people rooted, since time

immemorial, in the German countryside," while also stressing the role of language in expressing the collective soul of the German people, or Volk (2018:120). In the first decades of the 19th century, the Grimm Brothers collected fairy tales and sagas, organizing and institutionalizing the vernacular. Others collected songs and the literature of the Middle ages with the aim of preserving what remained of the national culture (2018:120).

The search for what was missing fueled the collection and preservation of vernacular tales, songs, and sagas, ensuring not all the enchantment went astray. A similar discontent led proto-ethnic groups to organize in the pursuit of taking back what was perceived to be lost, resulting in "young" nation-building projects. The artists and aristocrats idealized the simpler ways and times, romanticizing the countryside and its inhabitants. Accordingly, core sensibility ranged from aestheticized melancholia, wanderlust, sadness, sorrow (for a lost true home), bitter-sweet and hopeless love, and heartache, to resentment, vengefulness, creativity and courage. In other words, finding the true authentic identity of a nation had an affinity with melancholy and sadness that came with the perceived loss. The state and art had a regulatory influence[3] in emotional governance, as armies-worth of people were no longer falling ill with nostalgia but gearing up to take back what was taken away, be it innocence, idyllic forests, or prosperous lands. Most of these examples come from Europe, as nostalgia in its first form emerged in a particular time period and context in Europe. Yet, as the Turkish example makes clear, there are multiple nostalgias that emerge in different time periods and

[3] For most cases "regulatory influence" of the state is a euphemism. States when faced with the romantic nostalgia of proto-nationalist and nationalist groups responded with violence.

geographies. During decolonization, for example, we observe rapid Romantic and Spectacular Nostalgia in a short span of time.

Spectacular Nostalgia

When the state-forming efforts fueled by Romantic Nostalgia succeeds, a different form takes its place: Spectacular Nostalgia. Here, the newly-founded nation-states started to actively inculcate a longing rooted in an untainted past, using spectacular settings. As the empires that these new states were located in crumbled, if not having already collapsed, these pasts were not located in immediate history but in a distant time immemorial. Nostalgia was no longer feared by the states, like the Romantic and Medical forms, but became a form of productive power, one that could be monopolized, organized, actively managed, and manufactured in mass settings. In its historical high point, the early twentieth century, nostalgia became successfully institutionalized, as the form I call Spectacular Nostalgia. Nostalgic feelings were manufactured, contained, and sustained in museums, classrooms, and commemorations. Hence, this form relied heavily on organized collective effervescence. Anything resembling a relic, token, or signaling a primordial feeling or affiliation got attention, and became *invented tradition*.

Spectacular Nostalgia was lived in spectacles, and was extremely organized to the point where the state had almost perfect control over it. The temporal character of desire in this form points to a fusion of past and present, where the nation-state draws on past symbols to construct a proud expansive present/future. The Third Reich and its institutionalized nostalgia was probably the quintessential ideal type of this Spectacular Age. According to Johann Chapoutot (2013), Joseph Goebbels summarized the aim of the new government as “erasing 1789 from history,” thus, “repairing the chain of time,” by

defeating everything in the modern world which destroyed the old world. Nazis aimed to rebuild the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the eternal community, which was squashed by the French Revolution (2013). They looked back to an ancient times and nature, both of which they deemed eternal. And everywhere they looked for eternity, be it the Middle Ages, or the Mediterranean Antiquity, they found the eternal Germans. They hailed the rule of nature, which they thought the ancient Germans have followed in their law and culture. Hence, the more they came close to nature, they also came closer to a pure German-ness. They used powerful bureaucracy and industrialism to produce their nostalgic simulacra. With its extremely organized commemorations and celebrations, Germany at this era is a symbol of what the utmost control of nostalgia looks like.

So with spectacular nostalgia, the state moves to the center of emotional governance through nostalgia. Spectacular Nostalgia was centralized and organized by the mass print culture, radio broadcasting, and transportation that connected even the most distant locations to the center. In mass effervescent settings like commemorations, schools, and army, emotions got inculcated and renewed periodically. States had the means of disciplinary power and capital to influence their subjects like never before. Moreover, the transition from multiethnic empires to nation-states dominated by one ethnic group made it more feasible to designate a unified glorious past. It also necessitated the avoidance of the more complicated immediate past, as the route to unification was not graceful. The core sensibility of Spectacular Nostalgia revolves around pride, sincerity, strength, excitement, drive, being in awe, and honor. All of these emotions, when pinned to a time immemorial, are amplified, larger and simpler than life.

This emphasis on effervescence went hand in hand with a call to reason and rationality. Emotional governance required that getting carried away with national fervor, and immense love for the nation – which was necessary for embarking on big projects – gave way to a sustained excitement, drive, and motivation which did not distract the subjects from the mundane and day-to-day. What was needed here was a strong, motivated, and excited worker anchored in time immemorial, who was ready to wake up every day and go to the pin factory in the name of the nation.

Cosmopolitan Nostalgia

Cosmopolitan Nostalgia emerged in a world that is increasingly connected through a global economy, linked via popular visual media since the 70s. The transformation of industrial economies to enrichment economies (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017) is both a drive and product of Cosmopolitan Nostalgia. As enrichment is the process by which a value of an object is transformed through acts such as storytelling and craftsmanship, it relies on and feeds into Cosmopolitan Nostalgia. This process creates an aura and historicity around objects, relying on devices of authenticity, orientation towards the past, contact with important people, and national affiliation (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017). In other words, nostalgia started its journey medically, then was conveyed and felt through art, finally became institutionalized by the nation-state, and now, as a force, enters yet another domain: economy. Nostalgia, to which people succumbed and died, which helped people revolt, which attached them to their nation-states, now sells things. Cosmopolitan Nostalgia is a postmodern form of longing where multiple pasts are open to be desired, consumed, and interpreted. Ever shape-shifting, in this form, it takes an infinite texture: you can bite into it in “grandma-style cookies,” smell it in a breeze of “Chanel No5,”

touch it in a vintage consignment jacket, and listen and feel it in the fourth *A Star is Born* movie. In the contemporary era of cosmopolitan consumption, nostalgia becomes even more prominent in engaging with one's past. As Boym (2001) suggests, it becomes the bridge between memory and history and between the individual and society. Moreover, it becomes more and more of an area of consumption, and a genre to read the world. In a Huffpost world, where you can make a list of anything, "the past" becomes just another topic that is consumable under the fictional title: "7 reasons why the past was better".

The infrastructure enabling this form has multiple components. Popular culture, art, tourism, environmental activism/activism, supra-national organizations, global social movements, the blogosphere, and heritage movement are the primary drivers of the political economy of this form. Multiple pasts and structures of feeling are opened for global consumption, and both the state and the subject becomes nostalgic for multiple pasts. Yes, Trump yearns for a "Great America," and Erdogan wants to win people by the "Conquest of Hearts," but they have to compete with a plethora of nostalgias available for people to decode. *Magnificent Century, Mad Men, Outlander,* Renaissance Fairs, or *Grease* are there for people's consumption, and states constantly have to fight for people's attention. This form, or era, is cosmopolitan in two ways. First, it offers multiple pasts and geographies to be yearned for and consumed. It lends itself to be experienced through travel, consumption, and entertainment. Second, the nostalgia here is usually to a multicultural past, a cosmetic Eden where people from different backgrounds existed happily together. The means of communication allows people the experience of a common heritage with people they have never seen, memories of a past to which they have no geographic or biological connection which "creates instability by disconnecting

people from past traditions, but it also liberates by making the past less determinate of the experiences in the present" (Lipsitz 1990:5).

As we move from Spectacular Nostalgia to Cosmopolitan Nostalgia individual affective components of the definition of the past gain prominence. The state's attempt to define the past does not decrease in volume, but as other actors appear on the scene it proportionally decreases given other attempts, especially from the markets, both local and the global. This ideal type becomes complicated as the relations between the market and the state become more intertwined.

The core emotional sensibility in this nostalgic form are playfulness, lighthearted enjoyment, wanderlust with a destination, romantic-comedic, individual reflexivity, curiosity, mindfulness, ease with uncertainty (Frost 2019), flexibility and non-attachment. The governance of emotions is highly ubiquitous, but not necessarily orchestrated by the state. The individual is increasingly expected to take the lead in their own emotional management, and seeks the effervescence, or regulation, of their own choice. In other words, *individual reflexivity* becomes central (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). The temporal character of desire is very presentist, less essential and more ephemeral, open to interpretation, and based on taste. The paleo diet (how did our ancestors eat?), hot yoga (come connect to your authentic self while shedding pounds), zero-waste lifestyle (take back the planet, order compostable sandwich bags on Amazon), the Spiderman multiverse (look back to the history of Spider man, while enjoying a diverse and cosmopolitan array of Spider people and pop-corn), Prohibition era cocktails (with this Old Fashioned, every long-gone flapper will come alive in your mind's eye) are driven by Cosmopolitan Nostalgia.

Scholars generally approached what I call Cosmopolitan Nostalgia critically. Appadurai, for example, engages with the commodification of time extensively in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996). In his conception, consumption is the key link between nostalgia for capitalism and capitalist nostalgia (Appadurai, 1996). Differentiating between authentic nostalgia and ersatz nostalgia, he renders the latter as a tool of marketing. In this model, the kind of nostalgia one feels if they are displaced from their home is more authentic than the kind that is used in advertisements, movies, and fashion. Like Appadurai, or indeed like the Frankfurt School, Lowenthal (1996) disparages the idea of heritage and nostalgia because they replace history—the proper way of engaging with the past, with consumption.

The conditions of the neoliberal, global world with its celebration of diversity ask for stories of the past. While investigating the intersection of diversity and consumption, Comaroff and Comaroff, similar to Appadurai, and Lowenthal, engage with the link between economic conditions and the identity construction. Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) write about how the objectification of identity seems to produce a new sensibility, a new awareness of essence which includes affective, material, and expressive potential. In this era ethnicity becomes more commodified, corporate, and implicated in everyday economies (2009:1). Identity is constructed, bought, and sold to tourists looking for the authentic. The "real, untouched, historic" ethnic communities are sought after. They call this phenomenon the ethnicity industry, a new spin-off of Adorno and Horkheimer's culture industries.

Yet seeing nostalgia's rise solely from an economistic perspective ends the conversation too early. I think on a deeper level this urge to know one's and others' past

results also from a feeling of ephemerality germane to living in an extremely interlinked world. Making meaning of existence has never been so difficult. If we agree that identity is relational, that is, we construct ourselves through others, in their recognition of us, other human beings in whose eyes we need to be recognized are vast today. There is the need to appeal to all of them. And if we want to tell who we are in a nutshell, in the limited time that the world has for us, we have to be equally strategic with the story of our past.

I cannot count how many times I have heard the argument about how in Turkey "We don't know how to sell our culture. We have such a rich past and culture yet we don't know how to package it for tourists. The West benefits from any hint of past and culture, but we are incapable of profiting from our heritage." In a non-Western context, to have your past and culture worthy of consumption is something to be proud of. It is one of the many moments where you strive to be worthy of the Western gaze. The attempt of Third World countries to package and sell their culture cannot be perceived without thinking of this uneven power relationship. This process of making oneself attractive for the other's gaze can also be empowering, there is no doubt in that, yet every unique case needs to be assessed in its own terms in their journey of 'nostalgizing' themselves.

For Niemeyer (2014) this process of "nostalgizing" provides a sense of belonging which might increase solidarity and lessen loneliness. Nostalgia now is a common dialect that people speak. It is a trope that brings people together in the experience of ephemerality. Unlike Lowenthal and Appadurai, Niemeyer recognizes how nostalgia today becomes "entangled with memory and media in specific, ambivalent and intriguing ways (2014, 5) In this age time seems to bind the world more than anything else. It is a

common language. Like climate or environment, the passage of time has been a common denominator for humanity—although I am not claiming universality, and recognize that every case is still unique—and nostalgia is the predominant dialect of the language of time in the contemporary world. Existentially, Cosmopolitan Nostalgia may be the contemporary answer to the sense of ephemerality and insecurity. It uses cultural products from all over the world to provide continuity and sense of commonality, with just enough hint of difference. It is a form exotic that does not make you feel uncomfortable. If it does make you uncomfortable, it is okay because it is either already in the past or not in your immediate space. Nostalgia is a way to make and assert identities. It changes in different time periods and places which necessitates the researcher to ask the questions: Whose? What? When? For whom?

Is Cosmopolitan Nostalgia mass deception?

Horkheimer and Adorno claim that culture has become an industry, in the sense that every cultural product has become to resemble each other, as if it has been produced on an assembly line. Culture industry deals with consumers' needs, producing them, controlling them, and disciplining them by having taken over the civilizing inheritance of the entrepreneurial and frontier democracy (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). In this account, there is no space to move for the person who consumes popular culture. S/he takes what is offered to them without question and cannot even discern the difference between the "real" life and the imitation of it. There is a rigid distinction between consumers and producers where the latter knows what they are doing and the former just passively takes what s/he has been fed. In this model the logic of the base has been perfectly reproduced in culture. Structure and agency has become the same. This is

parallel to the view that values history taught by the state over any other form of engaging with the past, including nostalgia, and which sees the individual as a passive recipient of products of nostalgia. At this point to understand nostalgia, I turn to the Birmingham School, particularly Stuart Hall's work on popular culture which sees it as a contested terrain rather than a mere reflection of a dominant logic, and part and parcel of what constitutes society rather than a mirror image of it.

As the previous sections of Romantic, Spectacular, and Cosmopolitan Nostalgia show, nostalgia is a constant struggle of different parties, including states and the popular culture. Although, there is a move from state-led nostalgia to popular and individual forms of nostalgia, there is an ongoing struggle between different groups to define the right kind of past. The same nostalgic trope is usually interpreted differently by different stakeholders in society and unlike the model offered by Horkheimer and Adorno, the reception of it changes from person to person. Hall and one branch of the Birmingham School follow a Gramscian definition of hegemony which underlines power as a contested terrain that requires consent, not solely authority and oppression. Gramscian hegemony is the process of establishing "dominance within a culture not by brute force but by voluntary consent, by leadership rather than rule" (Procter 2004:26). Hall believes that "popular culture is the site where every day struggles between dominant and subordinate groups are fought, won and lost (2004: 11). He repudiates the base-superstructure model which reduces the culture to be a reflection of economic conditions. This view also gives culture the power to determine the social and political climate. Like Gramsci's concept of hegemony, popular culture is a contradictory space of continuous negotiation, a double movement of containment and resistance (2004: 26). Hall shows

how the resistant elements in popular culture get coopted and appropriated in the dominant culture to become hegemonic. The high and popular forms are interdependent where "the manufactured division of these two binaries is linked to the maintenance of cultural hierarchies and the regulation of difference" (2004: 32). Seeing nostalgia in this light complicates it. Thus, this dissertation asks if nostalgia can entail moments of resistance. If the answer is yes, what kind of resistance? Who are the stakeholders?

People do not just take what is offered to them without questioning, they process it and make meaning out of it, and they take part in the creation of popular culture, including the nostalgic forms. In *Encoding and Decoding* Hall argues that "meaning is never fixed or determined by the sender, the message is never transparent, and the audience is not a passive recipient of meaning (2004: 59). This is what most studies on nostalgia fall short of investigating, the subjective interpretation of the structural nostalgia. We learn what the authors think nostalgia is, but not how people interpret it. The nostalgics are marginal to those studies. Why do we reenact the Civil War? Why do people want to go back to the Middle Ages? Can such re-enactments and longing be resistant? When does it become hegemonic? What exact emotions are in a particular nostalgia? These are the questions that I will answer in this dissertation by looking at Ottoman Nostalgia in Turkey. Where collective memory studies usually focus on one level – state, society, or popular culture, limiting understanding of the complex interactions among them (Olick 1999; Schwartz 1991, 2005) – my project brings together state-led efforts, popular culture, and social perceptions thereof, which lets me see how state-led efforts are contested and how different groups 'buy in' to these efforts to different degrees.

Chapter Structure

In the second chapter, I examine the implications of the three forms of nostalgia in the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey, a necessary step to historicize the contemporary political and popular fascination or Ottomania. As there were not armies falling sick with the 17th century nostalgia epidemic, we can think of the Ottoman Empire as a latecomer to nostalgia. The perception of loss and change came later than countries like England and France which were mourning what they were destroying. Hence, I start with the 19th century effects of the European nostalgic movements, such as the Philhellenes, on the different ethnic and religious groups within the Empire. Then, I move to the ways intellectuals and artists made sense of the perceived decline, loss, and rapid change. I examine how they formed dualistic camps supporting either reason or emotion, either seeing loss as an inevitable scientific result, or something reversible if one leans on strong emotions to bring back the glorious golden age. What both parties essentially are doing though, is governing and regulating the sensations that result from the perception of tremendous change, if not the taste of vanishing glory.

I document the 20th century Spectacular Nostalgia for Turkish Central Asia, and how the young Republic was built around the love for the leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and devotion to Turkishness. I provide lively examples from early commemorations and history books to paint a picture of what kind of core sensibilities, emotional governance and infrastructure this nostalgia relied on. Then, I move to mid-20th century, and argue that the Turkish context saw the emergence of a new form of Spectacular Nostalgia, which relies on similar mechanisms likewise dominated and organized by the state, but has a different temporal object: The Ottoman Empire. Most strikingly, it feeds from

Cosmopolitan Nostalgia, at times to the detriment and complete depletion of the latter. As I will be showing in Chapter 2 and 5, *Magnificent Century* is out of fashion, while the government-supported *Resurrection Ertugrul* reigns, niche photo studios run by hip photographers "chose" to close shop, while government-run versions thrive. The state, specifically the AKP government, has coopted the popular and fun versions of Ottoman nostalgia to paint everything it sees after its own image.

In Chapter 3, *Love Makes the Law*, I examine the quintessential example of Ottomania, the TV Series, *Magnificent Century* and the Turkish public's guilty enjoyment of it. Focusing on five key characters including Suleyman the Magnificent, and his concubine-turned-wife Hürrem, I show the core sensibilities of Ottomania articulated through the show, and how the audience made of these sensibilities. Making sense of President Erdogan's unease with the show, I argue that the show provided a momentum for the government to regulate emotions. The sentimental, and jolly Sultan with a high sexual appetite and care for a concubine did not fit neo-Ottomanism's belligerent and expansive emotional repertoire—so, it demanded a war-waging Suleyman on horseback. Similarly, the public was not ready to grapple with the passionate harem women who fought for political power, women who showed-off their deep cleavages, shattering the long-held, and AKP-bolstered assumptions that the 16th century Ottoman Empire was the pious cradle of Islam. Engaging with *Magnificent Century* enables examining the conspicuous consumption that Cosmopolitan Nostalgia heavily relies upon, and how the production and consumption of popular history causes a crisis regarding the authenticity of identity. I suggest that, ultimately, the light-hearted consumption of the series contributed to a cultural intimacy—a sense of togetherness that

can sometimes result from a common object of embarrassment—in the Turkish case, resulting from an Oriental self-gaze.

In Chapter 4, *The Conquest of Hearts*, I examine AKP's 2016 Commemoration of the Conquest of Constantinople, this time focusing on the regime's Spectacular rendering of the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul. I recount the core sensibilities relayed in a mass-setting: revenge, vigilance, perseverance under oppression, enduring centuries-long jealousy. Relying on ethnographic discourse analysis, I show how in a ritualistic setting, the commemoration portrays a Manichean worldview predating to Ottoman times, underlines the power of the "people" against nefarious others, and is centered around a leader who is posited as a savior—the true heir of Mehmed the Conqueror. By relying on forty-five in depth interviews in five cities, I investigate the extent to which this nostalgic performance convinces my informants. Three interpretative perspectives emerged from participants' response: *Spectacle Seekers* see the rallies as a necessity and as providing emotional uplift as the state's duty; *Appraising Skeptics* approve the commemoration, yet are skeptical of the authenticity of the effort; and *History Guardians* deem the Ottoman past as sacred and regard AKP's use of it as emotional manipulation. The last two clusters, *Appraising Skeptics*, and *History Guardians* underline the tension between a strong hegemonic nostalgia, neo-Ottomanism, and political authoritarianism. As the Ottoman past became further sacralized by the cultural work of AKP, people start to question "emotional manipulation" by the regime using this holly past. This suggests that once leaders start using nostalgia as a powerful cultural tool, how people will respond is actually uncertain, showing the fragility of authoritarian leaders under the discursive powers that they have summoned.

In Chapter 5, the *Panorama of Emotions*, relying on my ethnography of *the Panorama Museum of Conquest*, I theorize how core-sensibilities of neo-Ottomanism get produced in an intimately national interactive museum setting. At the museum, as social actors viscerally experience neo-Ottomanism, otherwise distant and abstract discourses become concretized, generating sentiments of national belonging and emotional attachments, making the distant imagined community become personal. In this chapter, I first describe the context of *Panorama*, focusing on its location in the historic peninsula of Istanbul, and its significance as an example of AKP's neo-Ottoman nostalgia. Narrating people's immediate reactions, I then move to show how the museum elicits powerful responses with the help of historic stimuli. Focusing on visible facial expressions, and bodily movements helps me describe the visceral level of engagement with history. During interactions and on-the-spot interviews, a significant group of visitors emphasized how they would not be able to explain how the museum affects them, specifically in that they are *moved beyond words*. The non-verbalizable personal culture also came through when people told me that I should not interview Turks, as everybody would just feel the same; that "it is just the way things are". I argue that this inexplicable and elusive way of being at the museum is where the power of the affective register lies. Then, I move to how they make sense of their affective experience on a discursive level. First, the museum-goers acknowledge the suffering of the people of the past, and the need to be worthy of these long-gone people's sacrifice which have made their own Istanbul lives possible. Second, they mourn Istanbul and its long gone prosperity and glory, and try to make sense of a Turkey ridden with ethnic conflict. The dissonance between the visceral and discursive at the intrapersonal level makes them ask: Why can't we be as

glorious as we were back then? Third, I move to unpack a general skepticism about the appropriate subjects of my study, an unease that some visitors may get too carried away by their emotional engagement at the museum.

In Chapter 6, *Resurrection! "This Series Is Based on Characters and Events from OUR History"*, I analyze *Resurrection Ertugrul*, to establish its significance for neo-Ottomanism, and what it did to Ottomania—the Turkish Cosmopolitan Nostalgia. I compare the series to *Magnificent Century*, which claims to be inspired by history—unlike the *Resurrection Ertugrul* which declares ownership of Ottoman history, and deems their interpretation to be "of our history." Relying on discourse analysis, I show the core sensibilities of the script and the public reaction to it. This chapter delves deeper into the gender roles articulated by the series and offer a look into what kind of men and women make up the neo-Ottoman nostalgia. First, the chapter showcases the portrayal of the severe divide between Christianity and Islam. Second focus is the moral structure of the series' universe, anchored in the nomadic lives of early Ottomans ruled by traditional authority. Third, I focus on Ertugrul as an honorable yet lonely hero situating him in the nomadic adventure, and draw parallels between the nostalgic-populist self-portrayal of Erdogan in the Conquest rally. Then, I pay attention to modest, hardworking and unassuming women who guide and move Ertugrul, the figure of the mother, who talks in "lessons" and the resilient girl, who is so modest that she can't even bear to look into Ertuğrul's eyes. Relying on interview data I show the strong appeal of the show among a segment of the population. Here, I once again go back to my interviewees' comparison of *Magnificent Century* to *Resurrection Ertugrul*, as well as their own organic-intellectual interpretation of why they are drawn to it, and how others are swept by it. Lastly, I argue

that neo-Ottomanism has coopted Ottomania, a potential, light-hearted cosmopolitan engagement with the Ottoman past, and made it "his," by hardening its fluid boundaries into rigid heteronormative, and overly self-assured categories.

CHAPTER 2

One Hundred Years of Nostalgia

This chapter examines the implications of the three forms of nostalgia in the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey, a necessary step to historicize the contemporary political and popular fascination or Ottomania. I start with the 19th century effects of the Romantic Nostalgia, on the different ethnic and religious groups within the Empire. Then, I move to the ways intellectuals and the Sultan made sense of the perceived decline, loss, and rapid change. The intellectuals formed two camps supporting either reason or emotion, either seeing loss as an inevitable scientific result, or something reversible if one leans on strong emotions to bring back the glorious golden age. The Sultan on the other hand, relied on seclusion, Islam, and mystic symbolism, to emotionally govern—which paradoxically provided him a sacred aura. He shut down Romantic Nostalgia, missing the chance to harness that power for state's purposes. In the long run, neither parties won as most of the ethnic groups detached from the empire with the pulling power of their own Romantic Nostalgia. Moving on to the 20th century Spectacular Nostalgia for Turkish Central Asia, I document how the young Republic was built around the love for the leader, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and devotion to Turkishness. Then, I move to mid-20th century, and argue that the Turkish context saw the emergence of a new form Spectacular Nostalgia, which relies on similar mechanisms as Spectacular Nostalgia, likewise dominated and organized by the state, but has a different temporal object: The Ottoman Empire. Yet, the-state led nostalgia plays a counter-melody to Ottomania—the popular-cultural Ottoman nostalgia, best observed in the commercial sphere, and consumption practices Most strikingly, Neo-

Ottomanism feeds from Ottomania, at times to the detriment and complete depletion of the latter.

Romantic Nostalgia in the Ottoman Empire

Bubbling through the Ottoman Empire of the 19th century were multiple nationalist emotions, propelled by both primordial ties and the revolutionary ideas of progress, liberty, and nation from Europe's age of revolutions. One response to contain this bubbling disruption was a new "Ottomanism," an attempt to create a stronger Ottoman national-cultural identity. The primary carriers of this imagination were intellectuals, and artists. The imperial state later joined this effort, visible in Sultan Abdulhamid's myth-building practices that were anchored around the 13th century foundation of the empire. Ottomanism ultimately proved unable to hold the center, as more and more "nations" revolted and broke away from the empire. Yet even though they did not keep the empire intact, the state and 19th century project to create an all-encompassing Ottoman identity shaped how the Ottoman past is imagined to this day. Both 19th century Ottomanism and contemporary neo-Ottomanism placed great emphasis on the foundational importance of Ertugrul and the semi-mythical Turkish tribe, and tried to incorporate the history of Ottoman minorities within a quasi-multicultural citizenry[4]. In both periods, Ottomans who saw themselves as Turks, non-Turkic primordial ethnic groups, and the imperial state all got moved by the call of nostalgia and took action accordingly.

[4] Deringil, in his witty fashion says this: if an identity crisis lasts for so many years, maybe it is time to call it your identity. His diagnosis holds, given the contemporary neo-Ottomanism.

Nationalist Movements and nostalgia

As the 19th century proto-nationalist groups met Western ideas and ideals, an impetus to define identities forced them to think about the past, what it means to be a people, or belong to an empire. Emotions here rose slowly from the bottom up[5], like the first life-forming organisms on earth's evolutionary goo, and emerged in competition with each other. Groups were simply figuring out who they were, which almost always requires going back to history. Eventually, some of the proto-nationalist groups such as Greeks and Bulgarians managed to form their own nation-states, with the force of Romantic Nostalgia, which contributed immensely to patriotism and national spirit, engulfed many European countries at the time, and spread to the world through imperial activities, and intellectual exchange. Other revolutionaries were deported or massacred, and those remaining became non-Muslim minorities living in Turkey.

The Philhellenes Movement

Greeks were one of the chief Ottoman minorities, and the earliest to declare independence from the Empire. The role of Philhellenic nostalgia was key in the success of this movement, and is exemplary in underlining the power of nostalgia as a social force. This nostalgia provided the mythic distant past that circumvented both the Ottoman and the Byzantine pasts. The Greek case reveals the links between the artistic Romantic movement, French revolutionary ideas, and nostalgia. Until the 19th century, the majority of Greek peasants saw themselves first as members of a kin group, then as members of a

[5] There are cases where we can talk about an impetus from outside which helped mobilize, but we don't have the organized state-mobilization efforts that we see in Spectacular Nostalgia. This push in the Romantic Era is still in the form of Secret Movements, that were widespread in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries (Zervas 2012).

village or region, and lastly as part of the Christian Rum. Most peasants did not have a strong sense of a historical past predicated on the idea of progress. But with the help of Western European Philhellenes movement—a nostalgic effort—the Greek bourgeoisie in the Ottoman Empire became cognizant of their "Hellenic roots." Lord Byron, a leading British poet of the Romantic era and a nobleman, had immense influence and help in winning the Greek independence (Hobsbawm 1962:173). One of the leading poets of English romanticism, he became exemplary in leading a struggling nation out of its misery. When this nostalgia was backed by the idea of liberty from the French revolution, the Greek nation-state came into being, and other groups followed suit.

Even though the Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire were Christians rather than pagans, and spoke a language more similar to their Byzantine ancestors than to Ancient Greek, the elite became invested in and moved by their ancient past. It's telling that the culmination of Greek independence was described as *anastasis* (resurrection), the reawakening of Ancient Greece in the form of Modern Greece. Similar to other cases swept by Romantic Nostalgia, Greeks circumvented their more recent Byzantine heritage when they founded their nation-state, placing the temporal character of desire in the very distant pre-Christian secular past. (Herzfeld 2005:20). With this impetus they embarked on their own Spectacular Nostalgia.

This nostalgic movement to bring back Ancient Greece was especially important as it became a model for all the other state-seeking (Tilly 1992) Balkan countries under the Ottoman rule. Hellenism, resulting in Greek independence helped create and intensify the latent nationalism of the other Balkan peoples (Hobsbawm 1962: 173). The Greek independence movement developed into a breeding ground for French revolutionary

ideas, the perennial fight of the shepherd clansman and bandit-heroes against a government fused with the nationalism of the French revolution (1962: 172-173). Greece became a mythical inspiration for nationalist movements everywhere. It became the quintessential example of the cause of the European left, as only in Greece an entire people rose against the "oppressing Ottoman Empire" (1962: 173).

The wish for an untainted past was not only observed among the non-Muslims. In time, proto-nationalist movements emerged among Muslim Ottoman groups such as the Albanians, the Arabs, and the Kurds. Even small Muslim groups like Circassians exhibited a rise in nationalist sentiment. Both the Albanian Rilindja (Rebirth), and the Arab Nahdah (Renaissance) movements focused on re-awakening the dormant "nation" with the aim on the recovery of a glorious past (Hanioglu 142). All these movements projected a uniting sentiment in the distant past, and the work of unearthing and implementing was taken up by intellectuals, artists and statesmen. In their turn, the peasants became the lay audience supposed to absorb and embrace these translated pasts.

Responding to the primordial ethnic impetus to detach from the empire, the intellectuals and the state started to develop an alternative all-encompassing Ottomanist vision. Ottoman elites developed two veins of response to movements like the Philhellenes, as they struggled to contain and organize the scattered nationalist emotional upheaval. First, a newly emergent class of artists and intellectuals conjured an ideal proto-citizenry: Ottomanism, a form of imperial supra-nationalism. These intellectuals attempted to incorporate elements of Islam, pluralism, and imperialism to construct a new Ottoman subject that would be loyal to the Empire (Yang Erdem 2017). Second, these movements urged the Sultan Abdülhamid to legitimate his existence towards both their

own subjects and the outside world. As it became objectively necessary to unify the Ottoman people, the emphasis on the Sultan's position as caliph of all Muslims served increasingly as an integrative embodiment of the new “religious-ethnic identification.” (Deringil 1998).

The Ottoman experience resembles the experiences of other nineteenth-century powers who attempted to adhere to the values and customs of the past to answer the needs of an ever more complicated present—full of state-seeking groups ready for their own revolution mobilized with the force of Romantic Nostalgia. Like the Habsburgs, the Ottoman Empire borrowed the ideological weapons of the enemy “nationalists,” and tried to cultivate a religiously-imbued proto-citizenry. In other words, “What held true for Paris in the 1870s, also held true for Istanbul: the transformation of 'peasants into Frenchmen' paralleled the 'civilizing' or 'Ottomanizing' of the nomad” (Deringil 1998:67). The Holy Roman Empire in its transformation to the German Empire dealt with similar questions pertaining to the choice between particularism and federalism, and how to define local identities in the face of French occupation. Intellectuals like Goethe played a crucial role in defining the past, hence historiography and creating and curating identities, which I bring to the fore in the next section. To foreshadow, these efforts weren’t enough to save the Ottoman Empire from disintegrating, as neither the Sultan’s Islamist, nor the intellectuals’ constitutional prescriptions were strong enough against the force of Romantic Nostalgia which mobilized groups including the Bulgarians, Greeks or Arabs. What was once the strength of the empires—incorporation of diverse groups of people under the promise of peace, power and glory—proved the demise of it, as these groups mobilized for a future with the force of Romantic Nostalgia.

The Young Ottomans

In 1865, six intellectuals known as the "Young Ottomans" gathered in Istanbul's Belgrade Forest at a secret society picnic to save the Ottoman Empire from disintegration. These enlightened Ottomanists, contemporaries to the Romantic Hellenophile Lord Byron, had lived through a tremendous change: in 1864 Moldavia and Walachia obtained autonomy, in 1860 Herzegovina and the Montenegrins revolted, and in 1862 the Ottoman empire agreed to leave six fortresses in Serbia (1962:17). Between the 1830s and 1860s they simultaneously experienced the growth of commercial relations between Europe and the Ottoman empire, increasing Christian missionary activities, the pressures of growing politicization of Balkan and Christian populations, and the increasing influence of Enlightenment ideas (1962:14). Most of the Young Ottomans had received a Western education and worked at the translation bureau.

When Ottoman statesmen realized that administrative practices were deteriorating, their first impulse was to look back to past practices, which they thought to represent the ideal in its purest form. Yet, by the 18th century, the perceived route to reform became Europeanization (Mardin 1962:135). The empire started to recede from the formerly acquired territories. When the loss of revenue was added to this, economic decline became inevitable, which brought a horrified realization of Ottoman regression and European ascendance. Mardin argues that "with the bitter realization of Western superiority, the reformists wavered in their conception of reform as a reaffirmation and reinstatement of the earliest and 'purest' Ottoman practices" (1962:135), (especially as nobody was sure when the Ottoman government was in its "pure" form). Even the Young Ottomans abandoned this ideal after the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

Thus, the core sensibility of this period's nostalgia, especially felt by the statesmen, involves heartbreak, disappointment, bewilderment but also immense hope in the possibility of saving the empire. In line with this, Selim Deringil describes the typical late-Ottoman bureaucrat-statesman as the following: "He was a man who had been imbued with the ideology of Islam from a very young age. Yet, a very close second, he was a man who had been exposed to the ideas of Enlightenment, if in a most diffused form. The main preoccupation, not to say obsession, of the late Ottoman statesman was the *saving of the state*" (1998).These intellectual Young Ottomans were in pursuit of ideals of a courageous and generous nature, creating a climate where ideas such as "liberty" and "fatherland" became widespread (Mardin 1962).

The secretive Young Ottomans[6] named themselves "young," to reject the claims that the Ottoman Empire was a sick man who was bound to die, and to assert its continued vitality. Namık Kemal, the poet, and one of the most prominent members of the group wrote in a newspaper: "Let the Europeans believe that the Ottoman Empire is on the way to the grave. We know that it is not in the midst of a cemetery but in its mother's womb" (Mardin 1962:38). The idea of genesis lies at the core of this statement, similar to the Greeks' Pan-Hellenism. They wanted to save the empire but the course of action was not clear-cut: at points constitutionalism seemed to be the path, yet at other times an 'invented" Pan-Islamic wave took them over. Another strand believed in a liberal ideal of progress through emancipation from all remnants of a bygone era, where for others "liberty" and "nation" were the most important ideals.

[6] Secret Societies like the Carbonari define the era as made visible by Hobsbawm and Mardin.

Scientific history vs. emotion-laden glorious past

Namık Kemal and Şinasi are the two intellectuals whom I highlight to show the diversity of the "ideal" societies envisioned by these men. These characters embody two prominent types of responses to the question of change at the time. Their responses, and how they were perceived by others, reveal the conundrum of emotional governance. Namık Kemal represented "the romantic bard of ancient Ottoman achievements who, through the strongly emotional content of his writings, kept the Ottoman audiences spellbound" as he could articulate the "bewilderment of the Ottoman people who felt materially and spiritually stranded by the tremendous change that the empire was going through" (Mardin 1962:79) Şinasi, on the other hand, was a man of reason, a reformist intellectual, who studied public finance and literature. Their stances were reflected in their understanding of history. Should we abide by the newly discovered laws of reason, as Şinasi thought, or should we listen to the warm and soft whisper of emotions allegedly calling from time immemorial through the mediation of Namık Kemal?

Namık Kemal and Şinasi's different relationship to history illuminates the different strands that run through historiography in Turkey, and suggest the multiplicity of voices vis-à-vis progress, the past, and forms of emotional governance. Both Şinasi's and Namık Kemal's visions once again show that a recipe for progress and change necessitated an engagement with the past, but Kemal embraced emotions and ignited them, while Şinasi emphasized history's scientific course and the importance of progress. Their divergence points to the divide between rational and emotional, which was central to the regulation of early nostalgia. Remember that in its beginnings nostalgia was seen

as an overwhelming emotional sickness, hindering soldiers from fighting – that is, listening to reason. Romantic emotions that encompass nostalgia, in this regard were seen as pathologies in the way of rationalization and progress.

Șinasi, the playwright, publisher, and in many ways the foundational intellectual of the Young Ottomans, was one of the first scholars who took on the task of "reforming the empire." Educated in France, he was well-versed in literary developments in Europe (Mardin, 1962: 256). In his publications, especially in newspapers, he followed, with a belief in "perfectibility of men," the ideal of rights and obligations of the people. He was a realist, reflected in his efforts to have an objective approach to history. He printed articles on history from various authors, where they counteracted the classical Islamic conception of history as a process guided by the hand of god. Instead, they took historical events as part of a causal chain, and for the first time called history a "science." They devoted some of these serials to the cause of decline of the Ottoman Empire from the glorious doings of the Turks in their original homeland of Central Asia. (Mardin 1962:261)

Contrary to Șinasi's realism rooted in nostalgia, Namık Kemal had a strong emotional attachment to this imaginary golden age of Ottoman culture, which he saw as an ideal to be approximated in the present. Mardin argues that this was similar to "the emotionalism, irrationalism, and parochialism that began to pervade the European theories which slowly replaced natural-law theories[7]" (1962:266). Namık Kemal's

[7] Even though Mardin chooses a relatively biased view of emotions, I don't share his dual approach. Like nostalgia which emerged simultaneous to modernity, the theories of realism and natural-law theories exist relationally with "emotionalism, irrationalism, and parochialism."

conception of “Ottoman Society” as a living entity, with personal qualities in the stream of history, is similarly connected to the influence of the “romantic theory of history in the intellectual circles of the Turkish capital” (Mardin 1962:304). Namık Kemal introduced the word fatherland into Ottoman literature. Mardin, again, identifies his patriotism as fiery and romantic, and links this to his advocacy of feeling and belief in the insufficiency of reason. Like Renan, Namık Kemal spoke of the notion of fatherland as “an emotional bond in which the memories of ancestors, the recollections of one’s youth and earliest experiences all had a place” (Mardin 1962:327).

Namık Kemal built his Ottoman patriotism, and the coinciding ideal past, on the “psychological substratum” (Mardin 1962:329) of the spirit of conquest. Even though preservation of the state, or the ethnically diverse empire were novel ideas, his contributing idea was a “*union* of populations (all to be known as Ottomans) [which] replaced the previous conception of people living side by side in harmony but still separated by religious barriers in the absence of a feeling of nationality” (Mardin 1962:330). What Namık Kemal envisioned was twofold. First, the obligation of succeeding generations to live up to the prowess of the ancient Ottomans, and second, building a unified state and the establishment of the conception of an imperial Ottoman citizenship regardless of religion and race (331).

One event is key in showing the power of Namik Kemal’s art in conveying the core sensibility of Romantic Nostalgia. It also highlights how inexperienced the Ottoman Port was when it comes to governing emotions, in that feelings for the nation, when not attached to a Sultan’s person, were seen as detrimental. Namik Kemal’s play *Vatan yahut Silistre* (translated as *Nation)* was so moving that with the collective effervescence

ignited by the play, the audience one night marched on the streets shouting and calling Kemal's name, and yelling the word "nation." The port, scared of an artwork capable of igniting such emotions, shut Kemal's newspaper and exiled him. The play told the adventures of a soldier and his lover, who under disguise followed him to fight and save the Bulgarian town Silistre from Russian occupation. By the end of the play, our protagonists saved the town not because of their loyalty to the Sultan, but because of their love of the nation. Inspired with this marvelous outcome, they get married in a splendid wedding.

These nationalist sentiments intertwined with romantic young love would become the strength of the young Turkish Republic in less than fifty years, but were simply too much to handle for the Ottoman Sultan at the time. Failing to balance the power of emotions with smart regulation, Kemal's Romantic Nostalgia, was just cut off, shut down, and exiled from its source. Here, we observe how emotions directed towards the nation, rather than the person of the Sultan, is a new territory for the Ottoman state. Once we move to the Spectacular Era, this stigmatization of the emotions gives way to state efforts to control and cultivate the right ones.

Abdulhamid's Empire

About five years after the Young Ottomans' secret gathering in Belgrade forest, Abdülhamid II came to power, a Sultan with his own ideas about the ideal Ottoman past and present. His rule, especially the implementation of a novel state symbolism, ceremonies, and historiography, is vital to understanding the roots of current neo-Ottomanism. In many ways, the Ottoman Empire was consolidating its modern state status in Abdülhamid's reign through prominent practices of myth-making. This

flourishing of ceremonies and origin stories did not occur in a vacuum; the Meiji Japan, Tsarist Russia, and Austria-Hungary (Deringil 1998) were going through the same processes of attempts at standardization and inventing tradition. This tremendous effort was also due to the concern of image management both domestically and vis-à-vis Western imperialism. Abdülhamid II and the Ottoman elite felt the need to assert that they were a state worthy of participating in the world order.

The first pillar of myth-making was the cult of the emperor. Abdülhamid withdrew to his palace, and was rarely seen in public ceremonies, as an attempt to rely on 'vibrations of power' without being seen (1998:18). This linked the sacrality of the person (or imaginary) of the emperor directly with the people, circumventing inconvenient intermediaries like political parties and parliaments (1998). Abdülhamid started to communicate with his people and the outside world through a world of symbols, resurrecting Islamic motifs with emotional resonance for both the upper and lower classes of Muslim Ottomans (Deringil, 1998). The symbols, related to the sacrality of the person of the Sultan, adorned items such as the coats of arms on public buildings, official music, ceremonies, and public works, directly reflecting the glory and power of the Ottoman state. More specific and personal manifestations of the empire included donated copies of the Qur'an, imperial standards and other ceremonial paraphernalia. Thus, under Abdülhamid, seclusion and confinement, mediated by intermediary state symbolism, were the primary means of emotional interpellation. Instead of Namik Kemal's heightened emotions for the nation, Abdülhamid's reign communicated through subtlety, sacralization, and aura. Emotional governance here relied on mysticism, wonder and curiosity.

The second pillar of myth-making under Abdülhamid was the unprecedented engagement with the foundational myth of the Ottoman Empire, materialized through the upkeep of the mausoleums of the Ottoman ancestors. Here, the temporal character of desire was more highly retrospective, its object the mythical foundational moment of the empire. For example, Abdülhamid ordered an elaborate commemorative ceremony to be staged every year at the tomb of the legendary founder of the Ottoman dynasty, Ertuğrul Gazi. Ertuğrul's shrine in Soğüd, a small town in west central Anatolia, was turned into a commemorative mausoleum complex (Deringil 1998:30). In addition to this, twenty-five graves belonging to 'comrades in arms of Ertugrul Gazi' received new stones. Annual celebrations were now organized at this site where the 'original Ottoman tribe,' the Karakeçili, rode into Soğüd dressed as Central Asian nomadic horsemen. They staged a parade, singing a 'national march' with the refrain: "We are soldiers of the Ertugrul Regiment… We are ready to die for our Sultan Abdülhamid."

At this period, the practice of stating the Ottoman genealogical lineage in the state almanacs gained prominence. For example, in an 1885 almanac, the roots of the Ottoman family are taken back to the legendary Oghuz tribe and from there to Adam and Eve via Noah (Deringil 1998:27). The official dynastic myth told how the Seljuk Sultan Aladdin Keykubad protected Ertuğrul's son Osman, the founder of the dynasty, claiming that the House of Osman was one of the oldest in the world, and would last forever. As Deringil argues, the inclusion of this mythical lineage is interesting because the mythic descent from the Oguz tribe, which was popular during the 15th century, was invalidated by the late sixteenth century – but the origin story was revived regardless (Deringil 1998:27). I would suggest Abdülhamid's choice should be seen as a response to the hectic changes

shaking the empire. Surrounded by the force of Romantic Nostalgia, both from the ethnic groups in the empire and neo-Ottomanists such as Namik Kemal, it makes sense that he looked back to an anchoring foundational moment.

The imperial myth-making under Abdülhamid was further reinforced by building clock towers and granting permissions to display the imperial seal. Numerous clock towers were built across Anatolia, including small towns such as Nigde, Adana and Yozgad, bearing the imperial coat of arms. Penetrating the periphery like never before, these became constant reminders of Sultan's power. For institutions, erecting the official iconography of the Ottoman seal was an action of great pride and equally great scrutiny. It took some deliberation before non-Muslim institutions such as churches could display the Ottoman seal, and only select institutions were granted the right to bear the coat of arms. For instance, a Greek tea-room operator was punished after he held an opening ceremony, which included slaughtering a sheep and erecting the Ottoman seal. Similarly, the prominent Singer sewing machine branches across Anatolia were not granted the permission to hold the imperial coat of arms, even though they saw this as a way to show their affiliation to the Sultan (Deringil 1998:29–35). These imperial seals, which adorned the towers and were banned from the pedestrian shops, stand in contrast to the cosmopolitan age's contemporary Ottoman simulacra—the cheap stickers and fake-gold imperial seals—flaunted abundantly, throughout offices and car windows across Turkey. Abdülhamid would not approve.

Abdulhamid's icons of power, the clock towers, imperial seals, and the ceremonies around the ancestral tombs, fit the bill of Spectacular Nostalgia's reliance on symbolism, but they are devoid of much effervescence, remaining bureaucratically

ceremonial and outside the reach of the masses. Overflowing emotions such as at the Namik Kemal's plays were simply too much for the Ottoman society, so they were banned, or postponed, with Kemal perishing in exile.

The Committee of Union and Progress

Before we jump into the foundation of the Turkish Republic, and its history regime—the massive, spectacular commemorations, and the centralized history curriculum—I want to briefly bring in the generation that succeeded the Young Ottomans – the Young Turks – and to delve into their aspirations, concerns, and the core sensibility which defined them. If Abdülhamid is a constant inspiration to neo-Ottomanism, the Young Turks are the major military cadre which came to rule through a military coup against Abdülhamid. The Young Turks were the members of the Committee of Union and Progress, which toppled Abdülhamid, and ruled the Empire under a Constitutional Monarchy intermittently beginning in 1876 .[8] They employed Turkism, Pan-Islamism, and Ottomanism interchangeably based on the group they were targeting at a given moment (Hanioğlu 2001:299). In their attempt to safeguard and preserve the empire, like the young Ottomans a generation ago, Ottomanism was the most prominent of these ideologies. Even though Ottomanism was supposed to unify an ethnically diverse population, at the core was a Turkist assumption that Turkish success presupposed everybody else's wellbeing. Science, especially Darwinist ideas were very much on the Young Turks' radar. They now believed in positivism, and read psychology and

[8] Union of Ottomans, the major Young Turk organization, was founded by a group of medical students at the Royal Medical Academy in 1889. Ahmed Riza, a staunch positivist who intermittently led the Young Turk movement from 1895 to the revolution, gave the organization its more familiar name, the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress. (Hanioğlu, 2005 145).

sociology extensively. Most of them were medical doctors, and they strived to be "social doctors" as well (2001: 309). Yet, whenever faced with political decisions, they dropped the scientific discourse, and adopted discourses which relied on religious and traditional tropes (2001: 289). An ambiguity around religion and science defined their social engineering, visible in their inclination to scientific materialism.

Scientific Materialism

Scientific Materialism constitutes the core sensibility of the Young Turks, and highlights how they made sense of emotions and how to regulate them. At the dusk of the Republic, psychology became a major site "for debating the relations between the concept of progress and human nature and criticizing scientific determinism with a scholarly authority" (Afacan 2016, 63). This interest is crucial to capture the emergent scientific tools in "imagining and designing man at the turn of the 20th century" (2016, 65). Understanding emotions, and if and how to regulate them, became a key to grasping the relationship between the nature and men. They believed that "passions" need to be controlled through education. For Baha Tevfik, the advocate of the scientific-psychological approach, individual freedom rested on emotional management and self-control based on psychological rules. These Ottoman Materialists helped develop a rhetoric of emotional control in the late Ottoman Empire. In this context, emotions were seen as a sickness, and the materialists treated emotions as medical problems. For example, they approached love as a sickness, or dismissed literary expressions because they invoked too much emotion.

Baha Tevfik went so far as to deem literary activity a contagious mental disease. He was one prominent thinker who deemed poetry specifically as the most pathological of literary forms (Hanioğlu, 2005: 76). Literature, according to him, was a major reason in the degeneration of human society. His examples of demise induced by literature included the French defeat in 1871, which—he thought—could be traced back to the dominance of romanticism. Similarly, he thought the 16th century literary decadence in Ottoman Empire led to the eventual weakening of the empire. All forms of art, in his opinion, were entertainment "distracting the mankind from the pursuit of science, which alone enabled man to dominate nature" (79). This approach to psychology was obviously not Freudian, hence not prescribing to liberate the suppressed feelings, or exploring hidden childhood memories that might cause current emotional disorders. Like the pathological nostalgia of the 17th century, feelings and emotions at this moment stood in the way of the scientific progress of society and had to be cured. Baha Tevfik was on the "right track" in recognizing the emotionally moving force of romantic literature and art in general, and how it can get in the way of "self-control." It would be up to the early Republican statesmen to not treat emotions as a sickness, but govern them, through cultivating, and organizing the right ones, in mass spectacles, through the educational infrastructure. Singing and calisthenics for the nation and growing a love for the founding father would replace Abdulhamid's distant vibes and aura.

The Spectacular Republic

The effort to find a common ideal such as Ottomanism, Pan-Turkism or Pan-Islamism proved futile. The Ottoman bourgeoisie could not organize around a common vision of

future society. In the turmoil caused by emergent nationalisms, with a myriad of ethnic groups taken over by Romantic Nostalgia, the late nineteenth century bourgeoisie polarized into different visions. At the end, the project of "Ottomanism" failed to counter the force of Romantic Nostalgia sweeping multiple ethnic groups, given that there were not enough strong unifying patterns among the many groups living within the empire. "Islamism" as a mobilizing force also failed as Albanian and Arab Muslims still engaged in separatist movements. In this climate, Turkish nationalism, which was further boosted the Balkan Wars, and the occupation of Central Asia, emerged as the sole alternative. This conviction was also backed by the scientific studies of Turcology which proved that Turkic language and civilization predated the European civilization (Gocek 2011:137). The early 19th century Ottomanist vision, developed by people like Namik Kemal and Şinasi, was thus replaced by a Turkish nation-state, and its Spectacular Nostalgia.

In the Spectacular era, Turkish identity became the triumphal identity, sowing the seeds of contemporary Turkey. With the foundation of the Republic, Turkish superiority over the rest of these bubbling nationalisms, fueled by Romantic Nostalgia was further consolidated. An institutionalized nostalgia for the Central Asian Steppes, and the ethnic Turkic past – untarnished by Ottoman rule – came to play a central role in the formation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The Romantic Era, which preceded the monolithic Spectacular age, shows that the official Turkish history thesis was not a given; there were multiple alternative ideas, such as Ottomanism, or Pan-Islamism. In other words, the 1930s rhetoric about the "backward" and "archaic" Ottoman Empire rhetoric was a specific narrative choice, one far from determined by historical evidence.

Organizing Emotion and Reason, Central Asian Civilizers

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, a massive wave of modernization centralized governance and standardized national culture. Educational reform, including the introduction of a national curriculum, permeated remote corners through village institutes, while mass conscription, Turkification of the language, proliferation of media—especially newspapers—and secularization also engorged the sphere of state penetration. Through this newly implemented modern state infrastructure the single party regime disseminated a unified narrative of history that cut ties from the Ottoman past, creating a collective identity that Abdülhamid could only dream about. The new national mythology did two things: first, it deemphasized, and sometimes denigrated, the Ottoman Empire, and second, it raised Mustafa Kemal to a savior role (Brockett 2011). The new national historiography positioned the Ottoman Empire as the *ancien regime* that modern Turkey eventually vanquished. Two major academic undertakings, ordered by Ataturk himself, consolidated a Turkish continuum of glorious history, where the Ottoman Empire was rendered as only a blip: the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory. The gist of both of the conclusions from these research projects was that *everything* started with the ancient Turks; Turks influenced major civilizations on their march from Central Asia to build impressive states, and the Turkish language lies at the root of every spoken language (Brockett 2011:74–75). Hence, the temporal character of desire here is again retrospective, but this time the object of desire located in the mythical Central Asian steppes.

This nostalgia answered a question that every nationalist project has to deal with: how do you project stability and eternity while promising change and progress? Positing a civilizing mission as an ultimate Turkish virtue that dates back to the time immemorial, the nostalgia for the Central Asian Steppes provides both a continuum with the past *and* an impetus for change and progress. Like the Greeks who declared the Ottoman past a dark age and simply looked over the Byzantine Past, the Turkish History Thesis circumvented the Ottoman age by looking to the mythic Asian Steppes. However, by doing so, it simplified the complexity of the late Ottoman Empire, and erased the loss and trauma of the multiple wars and the Armenian genocide, substituting a simple, pure story anchored in a different past. Let's dive deeper into the new history curriculum, the historiography and commemorations to disentangle the core sensibility of this form.

History Curriculum

The banishment of the Ottoman Empire from official Turkish history happened relatively rapidly, as is shown by a reading of the history textbooks between 1926 and 1931. Whereas in 1926 the history of Turkey started with the Conquest of Constantinople, the 1931 version dedicated two volumes to the previous millennia, including it as part of the Turkish history. The last volume was dedicated to the Republican Era, which was a mere eight years then. Only a small portion of the third volume is dedicated to the Ottoman Empire, where the Conquest of Constantinople is praised as another state-building success of the Turks, while the rest of the narrative focuses on the failure of the Empire (Brockett 2011:75). Tellingly, the major reason of failure is falling under foreign influence such as Arabic and Persian traditions (2011:75). Ottoman history reads like a

potpourri of failures. Mehmed II is criticized because he was too tolerant toward Christians, Bayezid I was too wrapped up in mysticism, succumbing to bigotry, and Selim II took on the Caliphate which became a hindrance to progress (2011:76). The last century of the Ottoman Empire, which spans the Romantic Nostalgia in my model is especially disparaged: Mahmud II was an absolutist, Abdülhamid II censured Turkish nationalist writings, Young Ottomans were trapped in impossible idealism, and the Committee of Union and Progress wrongly pushed the Turkish nation to enter a war under foreign German influence (2011:76). A big part of this volume on the other hand is dedicated to Mustafa Kemal as a savior struggling against the autocratic regime of the Committee of Union and Progress. These endeavors to relegate the Ottoman past to a sequence of bad rulers and decisions climaxed in 1936, with another new curriculum. This one required primary school teachers to emphasize the fault of the Ottoman Empire which led to its collapse, and to explain and defend the reforms introduced by Mustafa Kemal (2011:76). The dialectical formula assigned the rise of Mustafa Kemal to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The following excerpt from this history book showcases Ataturk as a mythical savior, who rules through the love he has gained from the nation:

> Penniless and on his own, in a country struggling under all these terrible circumstances; relying on his own genius, will, and strength, as well as on the influence, respect, and affection he had gained from the Turkish nation as a result of his victories in the Great War, he set on to establish a new state and a new army… This is the miracle of the Turk. (quoted in Brockett 2011: 77)

This narrative points to a core sensibility made up of a complementary relationship between the leader and the people, the miracle of the Turk; the leader provides genius, strength and willpower, the nation in response gives its affection, love and respect, its consent. After the military victories, with this affectual consent the leader in turn starts the state-making and army building effort.

Commemorations: Eternal Effervescence

As Goebbels was perfecting the deathly propaganda machine, and bringing emotions and reason in perfect alignment in Nazi formations in Nuremberg, nation-states around the world including Italy and Turkey displayed how their unification looked in a representative commemorative formation, generating collective effervescence. As Susan Sontag claims, the portrayal of movement in rigid and grandiose patterns was common to both communist and fascist regimes, as such choreography rehearses the unity of polity (quoted in Ozyurek 2006: 129).

The tenth anniversary celebration of Republic Day was a quintessential example displaying the emotional governance of this form, or how emotions for the nation were cultivated and sustained. These commemorations show that not only time, but also bodies of the young nation are subject to organization (Özyürek 2006:128). To relay the power of the masses, the organizers gathered people from around the capital to reach eighty thousand participants, a number bigger than the-then-population of Ankara (2006:128). Both the founding father and the controlled masses got to see the meticulously organized parades, showing the disciplined bodies of the population (2006:128). Parades, characterized by rigid and grandiose movements, were a metaphor for the perfect

functioning of the body politic. Ataturk's speech was broadcasted to the whole nation, via loudspeakers placed in central points in the cities and towns. His voice infused the nation, not relying on some sacral religious aura like Abdülhamid imagined, but with the scientific miracle of the megaphone. That these bodies were disciplined should not distract us from the fact that emotions were very well at the center, in their cultivation and organization. Ataturk's answer to why he does not want to be called a dictator sums up the power of emotions for state governance: "I am not a dictator. They say that I have power, this is true. There is nothing I will not be able to do if I want to because I do not know how to act cruelly and forcefully. According to me, a dictator is one who forces others' wills. I like to command by winning hearts, not breaking them" (quoted in Özyürek: 2006:50). It's important to underline here how Erdogan is also obsessed with conquering hearts, and that this wish to govern through love is genealogically embedded in the century-long history of the Turkish Republic.

Özyürek's analysis of the mythologized tenth-anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Turkish republic illustrates the emotive aspects of the celebration of the nation perfectly. These early commemoration days are remembered as enthusiastic, sincere, and truly collective. She provides this excerpt from the Republican Party's pamphlet which describes "how the tenth anniversary constructed a nationalized and unified time/space/body with the leader"

> It is a sunny day…. It is 10 o'clock… Everyone is waiting for Gazi (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk), **and all hearts are filled with excitement**. Guests are **curious**, and spectators are **anxious**… **All hearts are beating for him in unison**. It is ten past ten. Suddenly **eighty thousand people start to tremble as electrified**. The sound of a horn… Two cars pass by the tenth-anniversary arch…

> His Excellency, the president, passes behind the tribunes and toward the soldiers lined up. At this moment the people surge up, and their slogans and applause shake the earth and sky. This is a very new experience for everyone. Those who have the honor of witnessing the **young excitement** of a nation who established a new state can brag by saying, "I experienced the **highest pleasure of my time**."
>
> **Thousands of people** gathered in the square start to run after the president's car like a snowfall from a mountain, like a wave from the sea. Peddlers with trays on their head, peasant girls with purple head scarves, women with sandals, and village youth are pushing each other to see Gazi. People were **screaming madly**: "Live!" "Long live Gazi!"… He got off his car and climbed up to the presidential tribune. In front of Gazi **was a mass of eighty thousand people**. Eighty thousand eyes were looking at the depth of a pair of blue eyes.
>
> Following his last sentence, Republic Square groaned with applause for minutes. It was such a **rare honor for a big mass of people to stand in such an orderly manner**. People were **trembling with happiness and excitement.** Thousands of people did not say a word to each other. They directed their eyes to Gazi's mouth, listening to his high words in a spiritual calmness (Behnan 1934, 11-15 quoted in Özyürek, 2006: 130, emphasis mine)

Another key phenomenon that draws our attention to the cultivation of emotions, and the core sensibility of the era, is the mandatory reading the Turkish Oath which was passed as a law in 1932. Children from age six to eleven read this oath collectively on a daily basis at school before starting their daily activities. Here is how it goes:

> I am a Turk, honest/right and hardworking.
> My principle is to protect the younger, to respect the elder,
> To love my homeland and my nation more than myself.
> My ideal is to rise, to progress.
> My existence shall be dedicated to the Turkish existence.
> How happy is the one who calls themselves a Turk! (this line added in 1972)

What sent Namik Kemal to exile, the love of nation, became part of the everyday life in the newly found Republic. In line with Spectacular Era's core sensibility, the subject who recites the oath is located in the present and looking towards the future, as the emotions suggest. If these emotions are successfully internalized, the Turk would not be idle, but ready to go to both work and war.

A New Spectacular Nostalgia: neo-Ottomanism

Until the 1950s, one-party rule continued with a collective memory regime that kept the Ottoman past at bay. Yet, the death of Ataturk, and transformation to a multi-party state changed how the Ottoman past was seen. The economic policies of the Turkish Republic—guardian of economic security and facilitator of industrial modernization—prioritized national self-reliance and development under state control. The state subsidized and controlled major industrial and agricultural projects and set up national banks to finance them. By the 1950s, new roads were being built, linking villages to towns and cities. Along these new roads, peasants began to move to cities in search of jobs, fueling urbanization.

In this climate, the Turkic narrative with the nomadic steppes slowly started to give way to a more sympathetic approach to the Ottoman past, as those left at the margins of the society were now gaining power, and the newly urbanizing masses needed a more enchanting narrative than the Central Asian origins. The dire Steppes were where they came from anyways. By 1953 – the centennial of the Conquest of Constantinople – a demand for a public commemoration emerged. A committee established by the new Democratic Party government organized commemorative activities spanning ten days. These events placed considerable emphasis on Istanbul as an Islamic City and Mehmed II as a Muslim Sultan. The central celebration was a parade into the city through the gate where Mehmed the 2nd first entered. Sacrificial slaughter of sheep, the Quran recital on the radio, and Friday prayers at the Fatih mosque were all geared to remember this auspicious event (Brockett, 198).

The transformation to a multi-party democracy also coincided with the harshest economic hardships including the Oil Crisis, and triple digit inflation with a massive debt to IMF. The success of the Democratic Party came with anxieties about the resurgence of religion, and the oppositional Republican party and Kemalist intelligentsia accused the party of undermining the secular and laic nature of the state. This climate ended tragically with the first military coup in 1960, and the consequent hanging of Prime Minister Menderes. Another military coup followed in 1971, ending the ideological and political divisions between the left and the right, and the many factions within these camps (White 2013). The third coup in 1980 dealt a massive blow to the Turkish left, including the universities and labor unions.

The 1980 military coup marked the beginning of dramatic changes in the infrastructure that contributed to yet another revolutionary transformation in Turkey in the following decades. The coup radically reshaped the political landscape. Turkey's predominantly state-led economy opened to global market competition. The early 1980s witnessed the deregulation of the media, and the rise of multiple private stations, cable, and other technologies that the state was not able to control – which allowed the appearance of Islamic radio shows and television stations. As a result, Islamist political parties emerged in the 1990s (White 2013, 7-8). Businesses owned by pious Muslims benefited immensely from the economic opening. Now named the Anatolian Tigers, their wealth created a market for bourgeois products and lifestyles suitable for Islamic lifestyles and tastes, which White identifies as a "Muslim cultural renaissance in fashion, lifestyle, leisure activities, novels, media, and music" (2013, 8). These popular manifestations gradually, once again, became absorbed by the state. The early 1990s'

commemoration rallies organized by grassroot organizations and local governance exemplify the bubbling moment of neo-Ottomanism, where it was ripe with potential of multiple becomings. One vein from this possibility emerged as a new form of state-led Spectacular nostalgia, which I call neo-Spectacular nostalgia.

In this context, if the 1953 commemoration —fueled by the centennial—was a blip, the 1990s saw the first full manifestations of the neo-Ottoman spirit in public and local governance. By 1994, with Erdoğan winning the Istanbul municipality, the narrative of the re-conquest of Istanbul made its first appearance. Beginning with 1996, major commemorations marked the conquest, not organized by the state but by several youth organizations, and —at least before it was shut down—the Welfare Party. Unlike the earlier small-scale commemorations, populated by a few army officials and characterized by a formal and sincere recognition of the military success and the genius of Fatih, this version involved a strong mobilized audience, predominantly the youth. Moreover, it was highly performative, involving a Fatih on his white horse, a group of mock soldiers dragging a ship across the concrete, reenacting the conquering army's masculine hard work marshalled by Fatih's genius. A Byzantine woman presented flowers to Fatih, people prayed collectively, a Turkish flag was raised on the city walls after a mock surrender, firecrackers were lit, and of course the military marching band performed.

This moment is the decisive beginning of neo-Ottoman nostalgia, and the foundation of AKP's contemporary Turkey. This rally was so influential that the 2016 commemoration rally marking the twentieth anniversary was also, in a way, a memory and a reenactment of this particular instance – this time dominated, perfected, and successfully hegemonized by the state. Çınar (2005) argues that "the dramatization of the

conquest and the activities around it abundantly employed various symbols that concertedly constructed a national subject performed as Ottoman, Islamic, and male." Çınar also captures the core sensibility of the era:

> Although Islam was presented as the "bearer of hopes" for current generations, it was the Ottoman/Islamic subject, Mehmet the Conqueror, who had brought this hope to Istanbul, and it was the Refah Party that was reviving and reclaiming this prophetic past in the present…This discourse conflated Islam, the Ottoman past, and the city of Istanbul into a singularity and presented it as the hope for the present generation, and the party as the political agent that had brought all of these forces together under its domain, thereby itself becoming the "bearer of hopes." (Çınar 2005: 158)

Neo-Ottoman nostalgia shares fundamental similarities with the Spectacular nostalgia of the Republic. Even though they seem juxtaposed at first instance, their resemblance is similar to an extent that neither of the parties would like to admit. In line with this, Çınar argues that Islamists who have been seemingly against the secular West-oriented national project of the Republic have been using almost identical strategies and techniques to implement their own political project, which she deems as "equally modernizing, nationalist, and totalizing." With neo-Ottoman nostalgia, emotional governance still very much relies on spectacular, collectively effervescent settings. Even if these very first commemorations involved youth organizations, and depended to some extent on grassroots mobilization, by 2016 the state fully dictated the spectacle. The temporal character of desire is fixated on the day of the conquest, and relies on an engorgement of this day to allow a state of constant conquest. This present is so proud and expansive it

spills on both the past and the future. Both Spectacular Nostalgia and neo-Ottomanism are extremely reliant on a presentist approach to time, which allows them to remain in constant action. The difference is their past object of desire.

Cosmopolitan Nostalgia: Ottomania

Yet, the fascination with the Ottomans is more than a singular political project—so now the temporal character of desire can point to a multiplicity of past times, the Belle Époque, the Conquest of Constantinople, the multicultural streets of 19th century Pera. Accordingly, the core sensibility is beyond a masculine hope to conquest, but now also include wanderlust with a destination, anxiety, and light-hearted enjoyment. Emotional governance through the rallies is extremely powerful, but it persists in a world where people are expected to tame and cultivate their own emotions, and regulate their venues of nostalgia through individual responsibility and streaming. AKP's neo-Spectacular nostalgia exists in an entirely different political economy, and a much more cosmopolitan Turkey. A monthly subscription to Netflix Turkey costs less than the good old Digiturk, and opens your world to more than the Conquest Rally. In other words, in this new form, Cosmopolitan Nostalgia, there is increased competition, and a diverse array of options. You don't need to get your effervescence from what the state has to offer. You can take a belly-dancing class, stay in the Les Ottomans Hotel, go to a luxurious hammam, and watch the *Magnificent Century*.[9]

[9] This holds if you want to stick to Ottoman nostalgia. There is an immense array of alternatives, including the nostalgia for the 80s in Turkey, nostalgia for a secular Turkey, a booming knick-knack and vintage market, old movies etc. Cosmopolitan nostalgia also like the other forms is a world-wide phenomenon. It is not only Turkey who is discovering their heritage, and its profitability, as I have shown in the previous section it is a world-wide phenomenon.

The infrastructure of this nostalgia is marked by the incorporation to a world economy which requires making one's country desirable for investment and a source of desire in as many ways as possible. The AKP entered the picture at this environment. As Turkey had entered the millennium with the wounds of the 1999 earthquake and a financial crisis, the IMF intervened with a set of regulations, including the privatization of state assets. This post-crisis atmosphere ripe with possibilities, set in motion by the IMF and the EU regulations, coincided with the election of the AKP with a parliamentary majority (Yükseker, 2007). The AKP expanded on the IMF's recommendations, through privatization, real estate and, most importantly, urban development, which simultaneously helped finance their political machine (Angell et al. 2015). As a result of these policies, a segment of Turkish consumers' economic power expanded, leading to increases in gated communities within the metropoles, glitzy shopping malls, restaurants featuring novel cuisines alongside Turkish and "Ottoman" fares. Remember that the Gezi protests were mobilized against a massive shopping mall modeled after Ottoman barracks, which was to reign over the bulldozed Gezi Park.

Obviously, the popular form of Ottoman nostalgia, Ottomania, did not fall from the sky but developed slowly from the early 1950s, when the waters slowly began shifting. A renewed interest in the Ottoman past was not only political, but also sumptuous fodder for the popular press and the films of the nascent Turkish film industry (Brockett, 193). Authors like Feridun Tülbentçi and Reşad Ekrem Koçu wrote sensationalized novels about Ottoman Sultans' personal lives. Starting with the late 1990s, an unprecedented interest in the popular aspects of the Ottoman past emerged, carrying into the 2000s. The Ottoman became a frame within which people, businesses,

and neighborhoods re-imagined Turkish identity as exotic, cosmopolitan, and cradling multiple identities, making people move their bodies in new directions, and inculcating new tastes for authentic food.

Ottomania was also born out of the endeavor of reworking Turkish identity as something desirable to *outsiders*. As an outward-facing domain, Turkey's heritage, now available to be marketed and consumed through domestic and international tourism, became a domain of opportunity but also anxiety– another area for Turkey to prove its dialectical ambitions to be modern, developed, and Westernized, yet also exotic, different and cosmopolitan. This exotic or Oriental Turkey, packaged to meet the desiring Western gaze, also appealed to the gaze of the Turks themselves.

Turkish "yuppies" started to consume ethnic cuisines, wine, designer clothes, and international arts and festivals which chose Istanbul as their destination along with their own "heritage." Ottomania found its expression not only in urban transformation, but also in urban entertainment where "glitzy belly dance shows were indispensable to the promotion of an Ottoman palace spectacle for enthusiastic tourist audiences" (Potuoglu-Cook 638). Dancers began to "act as the repository of Orientalized, consumable Turkishness via their sanitized eroticism marked by choreography, and no eye contact" (640). The craze was so high that, during the 2001 financial crisis, many urban professional women were paying high tuition rates for belly dancing classes, highlighting the fact that the dance form was becoming gentrified despite its historical stigmatization (Potuglu-Cook).

One other great example of Ottomania is the Turkish bath, or Hammam, whose connotations shifted significantly during this time. It moved from being the symbol of

unsanitary, backward, and communal bathing, to a sensual experience, an authentic form of detoxing, pampering, and self-searching meditation away from a hectic life. In 2012, for example, the Hürrem Sultan Hammam – closed since 1910 – reopened, debuting seven-million-dollars-worth-of renovations. The hammam now offered several spa packages, private party services for wedding showers, and circumcision feasts! These ceremonies not only offered 'traditional' music with zither, oud, and food, but also Ottoman costumes for the guests. Gold-plated water bowls, signature towels, essential oils, Turkish delights, and sherbets became props for luxurious feasts, where people could "feel like Ottoman Sultans."

A television advertisement for the Hürrem Sultan Hammam[10] gets perfectly at the core sensibility of Ottomania. It plays with the mirrors, shifting between scenes of men and women in hammam, showing them lying and dancing on the marble in misty, relaxing, and pleasuring scenarios. Yet, the audience gets the sense that this divide between the male and the female is temporary and titillating. They are going to be reunited soon in a romantic-comedic fashion, as the hammam re-enchants their life, and gets them ready for each other. In other scenes, the hammam is shown empty and located in historical Istanbul from a bird's eye view, with mystical music creating a feel of timelessness. Water dripping, light entering through the dome, and the empty marble create an inviting atmosphere; an atmosphere of timelessness, ready to be potentially filled by an interpellated audience. This form of Ottomania advertises itself for the self-

[10] The Turkish Bath, commissioned by Hürrem Sultan is renovated to operate as a high-end Spa. The cheapest package costs $250. Minimum wage in Turkey is around $500.

caring, consuming, pleasure and relaxation-seeking subject. The desire is for an authentically purified self in anticipation of a possible union with the other sex.

Ottomania versus neo-Ottomanism

How do Ottomania and neo-Ottomanism get along? They don't, and they do. One way they don't is exemplified by Halit Ergenç, who played Suleiman in *Magnificent Century*. Ergenç was at the frontlines of the Gezi Protests, fighting against state-led urban destruction of a park which would be developed into an Ottoman barrack-cum-shopping mall. As both actor and protestor, he was criticized for his lack of Ottoman knowledge. He was summoned to a late-night meeting after Gezi, where Erdoğan patronizingly remarked, "Suleiman had a harsh temper too," referring to Ergenç's participation at the protests. He also quizzed Ergenç on the meanings of certain Ottoman words, showing off his own historical capital. Not surprisingly, Ergenç, not an Ottoman linguist, drew a blank, but could not escape Erdoğan's jab: "You play the Lawgiver, how can you not know these words?" So, there is a constant battle over the authentic Ottoman, and who is the truly authentic heir. When *Magnificent Century* first aired, Islamist demonstrators threw eggs at the building of the TV station, protesting the overt display of Sultan's private life. Ismailağa Cemaati, a religious circle affiliated with the Ismailağa Mosque in Fatih, attributed unfortunate events such as director's cancer diagnosis, injury of the lead actor due to falling from his horse, and the death of a stunt-person outside of the set, to the "curse of the ancestors" whose lives had been represented so improperly. Erdoğan's personal reprimands to the production resulted in censors, and more battle scenes. A sensual Sultan, writing poems to a queen, and caring about her whims at a domestic

setting, did not fit the image of the war-waging Sultan whose mind was only occupied with manly Islamic conquest. Thus, the battle was also over the core sensibilities and governance of emotions. What kind of sensibilities did the Sultans have? What kind should I have? Should I go to a hammam and eat my Turkish delight too, or should I daydream about conquests on horseback, and suffer for the spread of Islam? What kind can I afford? Who owns Ottoman nostalgia?

Yet neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania also get along, or at least exist in a dialectical relationship, because neo-Ottomanism, the state-led version, first fought against, and then learned from the popular, grass-roots, and vernacular forms of nostalgia and coopted it. Four years after the first episode of the *Magnificent Century* aired, the state-led TV channel TRT debuted another Ottoman Series, *the Resurrection of Ertugrul*, this time more masculine, more belligerent, more bombastic, populated by modest women, and pious warriors. Erdogan offered his blessings by visiting the set, enjoying a selfie with the crew, wearing a costume hat, and tasting the authentic food. Once again a popular, playful, romantic comedic, and escapist form got hijacked and incorporated at the state's repertoire. This series, which I rigorously examine in Chapter 5, has immense viewership, and is exported to more than sixty countries, proving its soft power. Like Namik Kemal's poetry and plays which were first banned and then incorporated into state, popular iterations of the Ottoman first got reprimanded, and eventually got coopted into state-led popular series.

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the implications of the three forms of nostalgia in the late Ottoman Empire and Turkey. I started with the 19th century effects of the Romantic

Nostalgia, on the different ethnic and religious groups within the Empire. I moved to how the intellectuals and the Sultan made sense of the perceived decline, loss, and rapid change. The intellectuals formed two camps supporting either reason or emotion, either seeing loss as an inevitable scientific result, or something reversible if one leans on strong emotions to bring back the glorious golden age. The Sultan on the other hand, relied on seclusion, Islam, and mystic symbolism, to emotionally govern—which paradoxically provided him a sacred aura. In the long run, neither the Sultan, not the intellectuals won as most of the ethnic groups detached from the empire with the pulling power of their own Romantic Nostalgia. Moving on to the 20th century Spectacular Nostalgia for Turkish Central Asia, I document how the young Republic was built around the love for the leader, and a collective effervescence anchored in the mythical Central Asian Steppes. Then, I move to mid-20th century, and look at neo-Ottomanism, which relies on similar mechanisms as Spectacular Nostalgia, likewise dominated and organized by the state, but has a different temporal object: The Ottoman Empire. Most strikingly, it feeds from Cosmopolitan Nostalgia—Ottomania—at times to the detriment and complete depletion of the latter.

CHAPTER 3

Love Makes the Law

The Magnificent Century (Turkish, Muhteşem Yüzyıl) is a prime-time soap opera based on the lives of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566) and his wife Hürrem (also known as Alexandra or Roxelana in the West), a Ukrainian slave who became one of the most powerful female figures in Ottoman history. Süleyman's reign is popularly seen as the zenith of the Ottoman Empire. *The Magnificent Century* focuses on his love life with Hürrem and on harem intrigues. During the show's four-season run (2011-2014) it reached a large audience both in Turkey and abroad. The series caused a great uproar and triggered debates in Turkey —what Öncü calls "public chatter"— concerning the historical accuracy of personalities and events. These debates proliferated across different publics without achieving any definitive resolution (Oncu 2011). The public was mesmerized by such questions as whether or not it was appropriate to depict a Sultan's personal life in such detail and whether or not concubines actually wore such low-cut dresses. Meanwhile, the current president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, among others, condemned the show for falsely depicting the Ottoman "forefathers" spending their lives involved in harem intrigues rather than fighting on horseback. Several high-ranking AKP members asked the producers, the Taylan Brothers, to discontinue the show. Although they refused to follow suit, the Taylan Brothers faced fines and, according to an interview in *The New Yorker*, implemented self-censorship, particularly by a conscious inclusion of more battle scenes (New Yorker). Both the then screenwriter, Meral Okay, and the Taylan Brothers emphasized that they did not align themselves with any politics or

ideology in relation to the Ottoman past, and that what they were doing was creating characters inspired by history and thus ultimately creating historical fiction (NTV Tarih 2011). Okay also argued that she faced extensive criticism because of her gender, stating that a man in her position would probably not have been criticized as much or as heavily (Ergin and Karakaya 2017).

In this chapter I focus on the first four founding episodes of the series as a focal example of Ottomania in order to investigate the key tropes of this nostalgic form. The show begins in the woods in Manisa, almost three centuries after the Resurrection Ertugrul, in 1520. Süleyman is on his horse, accompanied by his loyal friend and hand Ibrahim of Parga. Messengers arrive with the news that his father, the Ottoman Sultan Selim passed away. During this first episode, Süleyman is enthroned, his reign celebrated multiple times with lavish harem festivities. There, he meets Alexandra, who soon takes on the name Hürrem and becomes the Sultan's "favorite" concubine, and eventually wife. We also meet the key characters *Ibrahim of Parga*, a convert and Süleyman's hand; *Mahidevran*, a woman who bore the Sultan his first boy; and Süleyman's mother. Mahidevran and Hürrem will play a central role in the plot for the next three episodes, as a rivalry emerges between them.

Despite Erdogan's condemnation of the show and the radical Islamist sect Ismailağa's protest of the series by throwing eggs at the crew, many Turks watched it with a guilty pleasure, if not a titillating disgust, or shame. In this chapter, I concentrate on this popular-cultural consumption which pairs with this simultaneous recognition of the act as a guilty pleasure. To quote the YouTube user "Zeynep Ece Ozcan," "this is a

series of series! Everyone watches it secretly without telling anyone, everyone watches it from the beginning till the end, but they hide it because they are embarrassed."

To understand what drives such reactions, I bring out important moments from the first four episodes, diving deep into the complexities of these historic characters' inner life worlds, and their constant identity crisis. I explore core sensibilities that are presented in the show such as love and jealousy, and the induction of emotions such as pleasure and embarrassment, while watching harem women and imperial men. I argue that these characters' ambivalent pasts, and ambiguous personalities resulting from conversion from Christianity to Islam pose a threat to neo-Ottomanism's essentialist interpretations of historic personas. Looking at the *embarrassment* uttered by some of the audience, I question why the Oriental self-gaze induced such strong and divided reactions regarding agentic and sexualized women, authenticity and conspicuous luxury. I claim that frivolous luxury consumption, the constant lingering on a complex past by the converts, and domestic rivalry between palace women, congealed into a private feminized sphere—disturbed the audience because the "Ottoman" has overwhelmingly been coded as a masculine public domain. Finally, following scholars like Michael Werner (1998), Lauren Berlant (1997, 2000, 2008), Michael Herzfeld (2005), and Martin Stokes (2010), I suggest that the series contributed to a cultural intimacy—a sense of togetherness that can result from a common object of embarrassment.

The Settled Palace in Constantinople

Historian Leslie Peirce says, "Süleyman was king in an age of kings," a contemporary of England's Henry the VII, Habsburg's Charles V, Safavid Ismail and others (1993:57). He

was known in the West as the "Magnificent," projecting an "image of splendor and power to an audience both European and Muslim," and was an expert on ceremonial monarchy (1993:58). Süleyman's reign raised many issues of monarchy, family, and power, of loyalty and betrayal that preoccupied his European contemporaries, resulting in dynastic drama (1993:58).

However, the 16th century was an age of not only kings, but *queens*. Hürrem, who broke the Ottoman tradition to become the first concubine to be wedded, reigned among Anne Boleyn of England, Elizabeth I of the Habsburgs, and Mary Queen of Scots (1993:58). Although the *Magnificent Century* embellishes the tragic rivalries and harem intrigues of the age, this reality of female power nevertheless disturbs some contemporary Turks. For them, Ottoman history is supposed to be sacred, not full of women fighting – not only for their Sultan's love, but for their own political power. This female agency, depicted most often through interpersonal conflict, is a profane reminder – in both the Durkheimian and colloquial sense of the word – which tarnishes the vision of a clean and profound Ottoman past.

The contemporary Turkish public, disturbed by power-hungry queens, mirror their 16th century counterparts who—unable to comprehend unprecedented changes—found the resolution to their astonishment in blaming Hürrem for bewitching the Sultan (1993:58). Hürrem did not accompany her oldest son Mehmed when he was sent out to be governor of Manisa in 1542, becoming the first mother of a prince to remain in the capital in a hundred years (1993:63). According to the ambassador of the Holy Roman Empire, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, the marriage was a testimony to Hürrem's control of the Sultan's emotions (1993:63). Hürrem—lodged in the palace—became a crucial

political agent. She acted as political confidante to the Sultan, especially with the letters she wrote to Süleyman when he was absent from Istanbul on military campaigns.

As I mentioned earlier, Erdogan condemned the show by asserting that he does not recognize the Sultan depicted on TV, and asked for its cancellation. This moment underlined where the president stands vis-à-vis Ottomania. When Erdogan pushed for a belligerent Süleyman, a warrior who spent forty years on military campaigns, he pressed the series creators to take attention away from the Sultan's devotion to a woman who played a significant role in Ottoman rule, and her grit to come to power. In the next section, I will look at how *Magnificent Century* deals with the complexities of these powerful figures in history.

Süleyman the Law-giver and Jeweler

According to YouTube user "Black Star,", actor "Halit Ergenç resembles Sultan Suleyman more than the Sultan resembles himself," meaning the actor does a better job at being the Sultan than the actual Sultan. The following scene shows how Ergenç convinces the audience.

The Sultan prepares for a day at the divan (council) by getting dressed, praying on his rug, and admiring his bejeweled throne in the mirror. As he walks sternly, his eyes almost piercing through the screen we hear his inner monologue:

> *I am Süleyman, of Yavuz Sultan Selim Khan's descent, born of Hafsa Ayse Sultan in the autumn of 1494 in the palace of Trabzon, bringing peace and prosperity to his birthplace, yet longing for his brothers. I am Süleyman, who sacrificed his brothers to death, to cruel disease and war. I am Süleyman, who nurtured his childhood with the pain of losing siblings. I am Süleyman, who at the age of six, sat down to learn with Rumi teachers. I am the one who loves mountains, mountain peaks, and stars. I am the one who plays with numbers, the one, who at the age of ten started palace school, the Enderun. I am the one who put*

knowledge on the lectern, who asked questions as he learned, never content with the answers he finds, revealing what is hidden, the one who crafts jewelry to learn how to be patient, who merges the light in mineral and stone, whose eyes get dazzled in the light he sees. I am the one who can decipher worthy from unworthy at first glance, the one who never forgets what he deciphers. I am Süleyman, who at the age of sixteen became the governor of Manisa. Today, walking to inherit the treasured throne left from my father Sultan Selim Khan, promising to seek justice every step of the way, I am the tenth Sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

The Sultan depicted here balances war, patience, art and knowledge. Like his forefather Mehmed the Conqueror, he is a man of Enlightenment. He is emotional and cares about the loss of his siblings—actually the result of a policy which his father put in place to avoid the turmoil during interregnum. He is sure of himself, and justice is his focus. He is not only knowledgeable and smart, but also fast in discerning what's of worth. He never forgets. Yet, in another scene, we encounter Süleyman's hidden doubts:

While gazing at the stars and the Bosphorus, the Sultan is presented with a nervous concubine, shy to even to look at him. He chuckles as she drops to her knees to kiss his kaftan. They stare at each other in a very suggesting way for seconds, with tension-building music. In the next scene, as the girl exits the room, we gather from his satisfied yet existential look that they had sex. His strong arms spread out on his knees, Süleyman gets buried in thought, and we hear his inner monologue, "I am scared, father, of being covered in blood, becoming a cruel tyrant. What if the power and the sound of being in power muffles my conscience? Don't keep your breath off me. Dear Allah, please don't make me afraid to look myself in the mirror."

Suleyman on the screen is potent, and seems to be enjoying moments of submission while his condescending side smirk indicates the frivolousness of such manners. But, we also understand that his power is not infinitely self-assured. At a vulnerable moment, we hear his self-doubting thoughts, and his wish to not abuse his power. This scene evokes a relief in some of the audience, that heterosexuality is no longer performed through acts that involves female submission. As a response to the

kaftan kissing concubine, a YouTube commentator, "Meltem Gonen," says "thank Goodness for *laïcité* and the Republic, I would not have been able to kiss anybody's kaftan." "Meltem Gonen"'s response is indicative of the reaction to the Turkish-style raunchiness displayed in these suggestive scenes, where a lot is left to the viewer's imagination with long scenes of staring, evocative smiles, and allusive side-eyes. "Meltem Gonen" imagines herself in a contemporary intimate setting and becomes grateful to secular Republic. These raunchy yet subdued scenes which console this Turkish YouTube commentator, that she does not have to kiss a kaftan before intimacy, also shows us with whom the audience identifies with. "Meltem Gonen" thinks that she would be a Kaftan-kissing concubine, not some ordinary woman, who probably did not need to kiss her husband's garments, even back then.

Okay's Suleyman talks slowly and in an unusual intonation, which gives the show an exaggerated imperial aura through the use of language. Yet, when he sends away the "distraction," we find him buried in thought; he does not want to become unjust, and does not want to become cruel. When we meet him during his first *divan* meeting, he appears much more assured, and his just nature is consolidated:

> *I open this divan court with the name of the mighty and merciful Allah, Bismillah: This reign is not more powerful than Allah's law. Our holy book Koran dictates justice and benevolence. Ottoman justice and Sultan Süleyman's justice will abide by law. In this manner, I free the six-thousand Egyptian families who have been uprooted and exiled from their homeland, and who have been suffering to go back to Egypt as they wish to. They are our equals. I lift the trade embargo on Persian traders. Their loss should be compensated. And those who have exploited these people will receive justice and be punished. Koran commands justice to be sought even between two people, not to be arbitrary. Therefore, I order that the one who tortured and agonized these families, who have endangered Anatolian folk's life and property, and who has been profiting illegally, the one Cafer Aga, to go on a trial and be executed as soon as possible. Cafer Aga, present in the meeting, cries*

> *out, "these are lies and slanders, wrong. lies, slander, lies." Ibrahim of Parga, his hand says, this is Sultan Süleyman's justice, no one has the power to change it.*

The show portrays Sultan Suleyman as quite complex; he has a front-stage persona which he dons when attending a state meeting, and a back-stage one which we hear during private moments as inner monologue, when chatting with Ibrahim of Parga, and later on with Hürrem, the "love of his life." In the next section, I will recount how the show depicts the ways in which he interacts with the focal women in his life, thus further complicating the Sultan's character. I argue that his relationship with the women in the palace, and his intimate friendship with Ibrahim consolidated the feminized-private feeling of the show. A domestic family setting which the Turkish TV viewer is accustomed to watch in other shows proved disturbing when it involved the sacred Sultans' lives who were coded as belligerent, and just rulers who carried the torch of Islam.

Süleyman's "women"

Süleyman's *mahram*—his private, his secret and the personal get embodied in the three most important women in his life. The encounter of the audience with this feminine-coded domestic domain has proven to be titillating if not challenging. As the Ottoman past has been coded as publicly-dominating masculine, it has been hard for the audience to grapple with this meet-up with the Sultan's private. The whole series can also be read as a long meet-cute between the Turkish public and a charming Sultan with the piercing eyes, who we get to know through the ways he interacts with the cunning, merry and bewitching Alexandra, the solemn, whiny and nagging Mahidevran, and the robust, strict

and loving Valide Sultan. What brings these three women together is their claim to power and their unwavering agency, another hard to grasp fact about these harem women, which made the public feel guilty as they tuned in for their weekly pleasure. There seems to be a constant rivalry between women and not much room for genuine friendship and care. Women are pitted against each other, as their worth depends on the Sultan's scant attention. Moreover, with their past of conversion, there lurks the question of authenticity, where the complicated nature of these Ottoman characters make the public question their origins. If Suleyman and his sons descended from the likes of Alexandra, meaning Christian converts, where does that leave a group of Turks who see themselves as the grandsons of the Ottomans?

Alexandra

A slave ship is out on the ocean, carrying a slave-girl named Alexandra who resists drinking the Ottoman Soup. She is loud, restless, disobedient and causes a havoc. We see a flashback to how Alexandra was enslaved. Tatars have butchered her village, including her parents, during the church service. In the turmoil, she also lost her lover, Leo. Her background fulfills the trauma trope and gives perspective for her later behavior. The following excerpts from the series show her to be uncooperative and loud.

> *Alexandra yells "murderers", and asks what more could happen—what is the next disaster to come? "They sold me as a slave to the Crimean palace, and now the Crimean palace has sold me to Ottomans." As they finally arrive in Constantinople, under the fireworks declaring Süleyman's inauguration, she asks "Have we arrived at the Ottoman hell?"*

Alexandra is stubborn, and she does not back down. Her behavior continues even at the palace as she is being examined by officials. In the following excerpt we understand the

complexity of the institution of devshirme or conversion—the practice of converting promising Christians to Islam, an institution which offers laymen the chance to become part of the palace, and thus the ruling elite. The Sultan Mother of Suleyman—Valide Sultan speaks Russian as she is a convert and a previous concubine herself:

> *Alexandra enters the palace, and lines up with the other new slave girls. The Harem educators pick and choose well-suited ones to be put to harem, as other well-established concubines watch them from the balcony and giggle at their wretched looks. Alexandra and her friend speak Russian amongst each other, looking sad and tired. As they pick Alexandra worthy to be sent to hammam she starts yelling and screaming in Russian. "Damn your Sultan, he should go to hell," she says. As Valide Sultan is passing by, she hears what Alexandra says; she understands the language, as she herself is a convert. Valide Sultan gets angry and asks who that person without manners is. They reply that she's one of the new girls who have been gifted to the Sultan. She commands that they bring that insolent girl to her. As Alexandra enters Valide Sultan's room, she ruthlessly cries and yells, "Let go off me" to the guards who are trying to hold her down. Valide Sultan tells her in Russian to calm down. Alexandra tells her, "They have brought me by force to this Ottoman hell. Please help me, please save me. You look like an important and rich woman, please tell them to let me go, to release me, or I will take my own life." Valide Sultan says, "You are Sultan Süleyman's property, either he or I will decide if you will live or die." Valide Sultan orders the guards to take her away. Alexandra continues yelling, "I am no one's property, and I will not be. I would rather die. Let go of me, let go of me." The educator says that she will certainly instill some manners in her. Valide Sultan says that they will punish her if she does not relent.*

The audience is made to understand that people at the palace have a complex past. Even the Valide Sultan potentially is a convert. As the Valide Sultan claims that she has the right to decide if Alexandra lives or dies, we also learn that with age and motherhood these converted women can have power. Alexandra does not break. Portrayed as a very strong female character, she refuses to be anyone's property. While she is at the dormitory, in the midst of another outburst, she gets advice from one of the educators with an accent:

> *The same spoiled raucous behavior continues in the dormitory. Alexandra throws her clothes on the floor, resisting getting dressed for bed. She gets a push to the floor from one of the educators, and they get a yelling. Kalfa begins a lecture by saying that they are now in Topkapi Palace, and they are all Sultan Süleyman's property. They also learn a lesson about how powerful the Valide Sultan is. One of the educators gives Alexandra a private lesson, a tip: "We all came here as slaves, if you are smart and if you behave yourself, you won't remain a slave. Shut your mouth, and have some manners. All these girls are getting ready for the Sultan, if you get picked, make the Sultan happy, and if you bear a son, you would become the favorite, the Haseki Sultan, and rule the world.*

Another influential calming message which provides a turning point comes in the form of a dream:

> *As Alexandra finally falls asleep with her cross in her palm, she has an auspicious dream. She is woken by her mom's touch, and a sad song, probably a lullaby or a lament from her hometown. Her parents and sister behind a white veil. She is very happy to see them and hugs them one by one. She is astounded that their wounds from the Tatar warriors have healed, and says, "I want to die too, please mom." In broken Turkish she says, "there is a lot of misery and evil here." Her mom replies that Alexandra can't come with them, because she needs to stay and take revenge on behalf of them. "You have to live, and become strong, because if you are strong we will rest in peace." She tells them not to leave her alone, and that she would not be able to get by and succeed without them. Her dad says, "Yes you will. My daughter is capable. She would stop this blood spill. Jesus Christ will protect you." She continues crying as they disappear, and wakes up screaming. When she wakes up, she realizes how her palm bled clasping her cross. Taking this as a sign from Jesus Christ, she claims Jesus has heard her calls for help.*

This excerpt hints that Alexandra is at the palace on a mission. Jesus Christ and her deceased Christian family will assist her on this journey. Once this seed is planted, the audience is susceptible to interpret any later action of Alexandra as part of her wider agenda, and thus untrustworthy. She is an implant, and a convert; the danger of her going back to her roots and deceiving Suleyman, along with the Ottoman public, always lurks behind her.

The Long Meet-Cute

This dream and the lecture from the harem teacher give Alexandra resilience. In the next scene, she takes matters into her own hands. Ready to build her own destiny, she takes the first step towards her fate with the Sultan:

> *One day, girls, queued-up, are moving through the palace, and meet the Sultan by accident. They have to bow their heads and wait on him to pass by peacefully and respectfully. However, Alexandra has a different idea. She yells, "Sultan Sülüman!" in a funny accent, and gets the attention of the Sultan, to the others' astonishment. There is a deafening silence as he approaches her, and they look at each other for seconds. The Sultan looks very stern, as one of his eyebrows is furrowed in anger. Then, Alexandra falls in his arms, showing him her beautiful green eyes before she finally closes them, saying his name wrongly, "Sülüman," one more time, and faints in his arms. He yells for the bystanders to help to see what's wrong with the girl. After this slow-motion meet-cute[11] scene, the Sultan gathers himself and sternly moves on to walk, in the wrong direction. He is surely under her spell!*

Instead of being a passive harem girl, Alexandra is full of life and tricks. The Sultan seems to lose his way after this encounter, walking the wrong way.

> *The next day when she wakes up, Alexandra tells her friend how handsome he is. In a much better mood, she jokes about the chief eunuch, and how he does not have a penis, gesturing a cut with her fingers. The other girls giggle. Ibrahim of Parga comes to choose girls to entertain the Sultan. As Ibrahim learns that Alexandra is the daughter of a Crimean Orthodox priest, he shows interest in her, and picks her out for the Sultan's nightly entertainment.*

Alexandra learns about this lucky duty as she is chatting up with her best friend about the concubines who have a secure spot in the harem:

> *Alexandra says, "Look at those favorites' clothes and jewelry. They stay in feather beds and beautiful rooms. Look at us Maria. What about us?" Maria is more optimistic and says "Maybe we will be like them one day." One of the girls approach them and tell that the Sultan's beautiful chief consort, Mahidevran Sultan, and her son have arrived. Alexandra says in Russian, "I don't care, I hope they die." Sümbül Aga and the main educator come in to pick Alexandra and*

[11] In film and television, a meet-cute is a scene in which the two people who will form a future romantic couple meet for the first time, typically under unusual, humorous, or "cute" circumstances.

Maria for preparations for the night. They are scared they are going to receive punishment as they do not know what is going on. Maria asks, "Forbidden? Punishment? Beating?" The chief educator replies, "You are busy tonight, you will be entertaining the Sultan. Do you know how to dance and sing?" As this goes on, Alexandra's head is high and she looks very assured and proud of herself.

Alexandra uses this opportunity to show her skills in enchantment.

We get treated to a minutes-long group dance scene which includes a solo by Alexandra. The music is upbeat, jolly and romantic, Suleyman and her lock eyes suggestively, during Alexandra's whole seductive routine. At the end, Alexandra kneels and looks down on the floor eagerly. Suleyman takes his handkerchief out in slow motion and throws it to Alexandra. It's Alexandra's ticket to Süleyman's bed. Yet, after her daylong preparation for a night with the Sultan, Mahidevran intervenes at the door, and hinders Alexandra from entering. Mahidevran forces herself in the bedroom, to Süleyman's astonishment, who was nervously and eagerly waiting for Alexandra, checking himself out in the mirror. Even though Suleyman seemingly accepts Mahidevran, the next day, Ibrahim gets a scolding. Suleyman was indeed beside himself with disappointment as he saw Mahidevran enter the room instead of Alexandra.

All of this waiting provides an extreme titillation for the audience. I personally felt curious and, to my astonishment, angry with Mahidevran who is trying to force herself even though "Suleyman is just not that into her." I also found Alexandra talented, and admired her hard work in learning the Ottoman style dances in such a short time. By the next episode, we, the viewers, get titillated again, and have a second chance at watching the two finally meet in bed:

As Suleyman is pacing up and down his bedroom, Alexandra walks nervously with harem educators. As she gets a checklist of what she is supposed to do, and what's forbidden, she looks like she is about to faint from nerves again. Her teacher tells her not to be afraid. Süleyman looks as nervous as her as she finally walks in. She kisses the skirt of his kaftan, and while he is smiling, she faints again. As she wakes up, in broken Turkish she asks for forgiveness for her nerves, caused by too much waiting. Leaving them in bed, the scene shifts to Mahidevran looking pale and very sickly. She cries in bed, hugging her son. Ibrahim's violin on the balcony brings everyone's moments together. After Alexandra and Süleyman have bedded, we watch them talk while they eat, and Alexandra says

> *she wants to be Süleyman's "everything," like his friend Ibrahim. Suleyman laughs at her, and says, "I think you are jealous of Ibrahim." When they wake up, Alexandra makes him laugh with her jokes. To everyone's astonishment at the harem, Alexandra is not back, instead spending the whole day with the Sultan laughing, eating and being merry. Süleyman even says, "I haven't laughed like this in a long time." They look at their reflection on the mirror, and Süleyman asks her, "Where did you come from, where? She replies, "I came from to you from the seas, I am yours. These eyes, these lips, this heart is yours."*

Like this excerpt shows, Alexandra is chatty, merry. She is just jealous *just enough*, unlike Mahidevran, who is overconsumed by her anger, endless crying sessions and headaches:

> *As Mahidevran is getting ready to spend the night at Sultan's room, she learns that Alexandra has still not left the room. We get treated to Mahidevran crying, while Süleyman's sister is trying to console her. Everyone seems to be sorry for her. Alexandra meanwhile performs a mini comedy session and imitates her teachers, and palace officials in the harem, making the Sultan laugh even more. That's when she receives a new name, Hürrem, the one who makes one merry, who makes one smile. Süleyman says, "Your name from now on is Hürrem." Hürrem from then on commands everyone to call her with her new given name.*

Once again we are treated with the message that men like merry women. As Hürrem brings joy, they spend yet another night together:

> *The third morning, as they are eating together again, Suleyman calls her a Sultan, which delights her. She acts sheepish, and asks "Am I a queen now?" "You are the Sultan of my heart," says Suleyman. He recites poems to her, and gifts her a very precious ring he has been working on. As Hürrem is going back to her chambers after her days-long retreat with the Sultan, she runs into Mahidevran, who looks like a ghost: she lost a baby, probably because of her sorrow. When she sees that Hürrem is wearing the ring that Süleyman was perfecting for a long time, she becomes mad with anger. As she thought the emerald-studded ring was meant for her, seeing it adorning Hürrem's finger becomes the symbol of her defeat. Mahidevran cries through the palace corridors inconsolably, calls Hürrem a thief and physically beats her for a prolonged period. Hürrem does not respond, and takes the beating. She is left on the floor, covered in blood, unconscious. In the series' heyday this ring became dubbed the "Hürrem ring" in Turkish marketing. Over a million reproductions were sold, becoming the perfect Baudrillardian simulacra for Ottomania.*

Mahidevran

Let's dive deeper into the character of Mahidevran, Süleyman's child-bearing concubine. She is very slender, has big blue eyes, and accentuated cheekbones. She and their five-year old son arrive at the palace right after Süleyman's enthronement. Mahidevran is depicted as attention-seeking, whiny, and as she continues getting a cold shoulder from Suleyman, as depressed and crazy. She seems to be very caring towards her only son—her ticket to a future at the palace.

> *As they arrive at Topkapi Palace, the little prince tells his mom, "I would get lost in this palace, it's so big. How am I going to find you?" She says, "I will always be by your side, don't be scared." Then they proceed to see Valide Sultan. As Mahidevran and Suleyman meet, Mahidevran looks worried, short of the attention she expected to get. Süleyman embraces his son and says in a proud higher tone, "My Son, my little one. My dear son, I missed you so much, my Mustafa." Süleyman is colder towards Mahidevran, and says, "Welcome, we missed you," and hands her his hand. She kisses it and looks at him smiling. "We missed you too, my Sultan" she says.*

Yet, as she is not receiving the wanted attention from the Sultan and is left to spend her first night in her own chamber rather than with the Sultan, she becomes mean and ill. Even her patience towards Mustafa seems to be dwindling.

> *In their chamber Mustafa is being naughty and does not want to go to bed. "I won't sleep," he says. "My dad will be coming; Ibrahim will be coming." "Mustafa don't shout, I have a headache," Mahidevran replies. Mustafa continues whining, and tells the maid, "I command you to leave me alone." One of the old favorites come in to welcome them, saying "Masallah! Mustafa has grown up." Mahidevran is terse and scolds her for trivial things. She offers help, and to send for concubines, but Mahidevran refuses. Finally, the woman gives in to provocation and says. "Such a pity that you will be alone in your first night, a feast and celebration is being prepared for our Sultan. There is music, dance and everything." Mahidevran asks, "Is that so? Who is preparing it?" She replies, "Valide Sultan ordered it, you haven't heard?" She yells at the girls in vain, and says, "Girls take these away from me, you are not working hard enough, hurry."*

As this interaction shows, there seems to be a constant rivalry between women and not much room for genuine friendship and care. Women are pitted against each other, as their worth depends on the Sultan's attention. A fallen favorite is trying to make Mahidevran feel bad as Mahidevran commands her not to touch her precious belongings. For Mahidevran, things at the palace seem to go on a downward spiral as she tries to make herself wanted by Suleyman. She helps get Hürrem thrown into a jail cell—but when Suleyman finds out, he immediately gets her taken out, and tends to her.

In a later episode, Mahidevran loses a baby—potentially because she is too upset with Süleyman's negligence. She blames Hürrem, and beats her badly, which paves the way to her fall from grace. The last straw for Mahidevran and Süleyman's relationship seems to come after this incident, which left Hürrem's face ruined for days. As Mahidevran weeps uncontrollably, once Suleyman has found out what Mahidevran did to Hürrem's face he storms in, and "ends," everything between them:

> *Suleyman: Who do you think you are? You are not my Mahidevran Sultan. Say it, how did this devil enter you?*
> *Suleyman: My Sultan, I… (vehemently crying)*
> *Suleyman: How could you raise a hand against my mahram (my private, secret)? That means you raised that hand against me. I don't want to see you, hear your voice, even [notice] your shadow. I don't want to hear your voice. What have you done to us? Mahidevran, you have killed us.*

With this scene, Mahidevran's "loss" to Hürrem is complete.

Mother

The most powerful female figure is Süleyman's decadent mother. Like Hürrem, she is probably of slave origin. On his first day as a newly minted Sultan, Suleyman goes to see her, and says, "Validem, my Mother, may Allah destine us to show the power of the

Ottoman to the world." Valide Sultan declares: "Bring my lion's kaftan." Süleyman dons the ostentatious and decadent kaftan, and gets her blessings. As this interaction indicates, the relationship between mother and son is one of respect and intimacy. With age, a woman who has given birth to a son—who grows to be successfully enthroned, becomes as powerful as she can get in the Ottoman society. Even though she is loving towards her son and grandson, she is otherwise stern, dominating harem women. In this following scene she gives Mahidevran a lesson:

> *In her chamber, Valide Sultan hugs Mustafa and kisses him feelingly. "My Mustafa, oh how much I missed you, my soul, the apple of my eye. Did you miss me too?" Mustafa says, "Yes, I did," but then goes on a tantrum, saying, "Where is my father?" Bring me to my father." His mom says: "Your dad must be busy; you will go later. Isn't that so, Aunt Hatice? Hatice says, "Yes, Mustafa." Mustafa replies, "I command, bring me to him. Isn't this my palace?" and yells, "I own this place." This behavior receives cold, disapproving looks from Valide and her daughter. Valide Sultan yells, "How can he talk like that? Do you teach these things to a five-year-old? How dare you?" Mahidevran says, "Please accept my apology my Valide." Valide Sultan calls Mustafa, "Come here Mustafa, come," and says, "This palace has only one owner Mustafa, His Excellency Sultan Süleyman Khan. Repeat after me." The child says, "His Excellency Sultan Süleyman Khan." Valide Sultan says, "Let me never hear you say such things again. Now go play outside. Take him out please." Then Mahidevran gets a scolding with a very cold gaze from Valide Sultan. Mahidevran says "He is only a child my Valide, he is just talking nonsense. Please accept my apology." Valide Sultan says, "Moms should behave Mahidevran, this is not how you educate a Shahzadah." Mahidevran is ashamed and looks down.*

In other scenes, she tries to help Mahidevran and educates her in how to be a mother.

> *Mahidevran says, "Tonight, your majesty is entertaining himself in harem. It was our first night together," to which the Valide Sultan replies, "Was my son supposed to ask your permission? You are a son bearer. You are the favorite. You have hundreds of rivals wanting to take your place. Don't whine like a young girl. Or else this palace will swallow you alive. Now, gather yourself and reside in your chambers like a proper Hanim Sultan." Mahidevran apologizes to which*

> *Valide Sultan replies tersely, "Such simple matters won't upset me daughter. Sleep well, tomorrow is a new day."*

Mahidevran does not succeed at donning the motherly role, and wants more. She wants to be wanted and loved by the Sultan. As she wants more than motherhood, she not only falls from the Sultan's grace, but also the audience's. For example, YouTube user "acrgzm1982 pkts" says,

> *"You are a psychopath Mahidevran, you are mentally ill! You, psychopath I hate you! Who would like a psychopathic, whiny and gloomy woman like yourself anyways?"*

Another user, "ShimReia," offers a longitudinal self-reflection:

> *"I first watched this when I was in early 20s. At that time, i pitied Mahidevran and took her side (or more like I support Mustafa). But now re-watching this again made me realize. Mahidevran whined a lot, incapable and full of jealousy and hatred. She also greedy. If i were her, i will stay silent and rise Mustafa so he will become the next Sultan. However, re-watching this doesn't make me likes Hürrem a bit [smiley face] Yeah I admitted she was smart but also cunning and toxic.*

Maybe not surprisingly both these comments are sexist, and one particularly stigmatizes mental illness. "ShimReia's" self-reflection offers a glimpse into how women learn the rules of the game throughout their lives, and grasp how power works. "ShimReia" pitied Mahidevran ten years ago, but now knows better—to accept her fate without love to become a silent and respected woman. These line up with common-sense rules that dictate that women should not be gloomy, and depressed, even when they lose their loved one to a novice. They should be jolly, and merry. Yet, they also cannot be too cunning. If they fight for love and power, they will be seen as toxic. When Suleyman and Ibrahim plan and calculate to win wars, it's seen as diplomacy and courage. When women fight within the confines of what's allowed them, they are seen as sick and toxic.

Süleyman's best friend

Süleyman's loyal friend and falconer—soon to become hasodabaşı[12]Ibrahim of Parga has a fluid identity, as he was uprooted from his Christian village to be conscripted into the Ottoman Palace. Even though he is a lucky convert on the ascend to power, he constantly engages in inner musings about his heritage, meditating about his identity. These character depictions unsettle the long held assumptions about the Ottoman past coded as Muslim. They direct the attention to the "murky" roots of Turkishness, and build potential for anxiety. Unlike the characters in *Resurrection Ertugrul*, who are rigid, and depicted as infinitely good or bad, characters in *Magnificent Century* are more prone to make the audience engage with the Ottoman past in a relatively critical way.

We meet Süleyman's loyal friend, Ibrahim of Parga, in the first scene of the series. Suleyman and Ibrahim are extremely close, and sometimes the romance between them overrides any other romance on the show: As a messenger arrives while they are hunting, Süleyman and Ibrahim understand each other with one single look at each other's eyes, that the Sultan—Süleyman's father, just passed away. Their relationship is informal, and seems too intimate for one between a Sultan and his subject. The two closely look after and confide in each other.

In the following scene Suleyman and Ibrahim gaze at the stars, and dream about what they will accomplish together. Ibrahim receives a new title.

> *Sultan Süleyman and Ibrahim of Parga look at the same sky full with exploding fireworks. Süleyman asks: "Do you see this Ibrahim? Slowly, we are coming closer to the dreams we have dreamt." Ibrahim says, "The future will be bigger and more magnificent my Hünkâr. You will be a greater emperor than the*

[12] Hasodabaşı is Sultan's hand, the person who takes care of the Sultan's personal life.

Alexander Great who you admire, and aspire to." Your majesty, you are the Alexander of our time. As he takes a bite from the nuts, Süleyman replies: "Only you and I believe this dream Ibrahim, we will see what the fate will show us." Then Suleyman calls mischievously, looking at Ibrahim who seems to be lost gazing at the nightly Bosphorus sky: "You lost yourself in the stars Pargali, what is going on? What are they telling you?" They are interrupted by the vizier, who has come to give back his seal as he worked for Süleyman's father. Süleyman says that he would like him to stay as his vizier, and that there is no need to give back the seal, as he has successfully and loyally served for Yavuz Sultan Selim, and that the state owes him for that. He says: "I wish that you continue your duties." "Your wish is a command for me," he replies, and hopes that Süleyman accepts his gratitude. Suleyman says, there is another matter Piri Pasha, you know my grand falconer Ibrahim of Parga. He is to be my "hasodabaşı" from now on, let it be known. Ibrahim immediately kneels and bows down to him.

In this next scene, we see Suleyman getting cocky with Ibrahim's encouragement:

Sultan Süleyman is shown working carefully to make a ring, and thinking about the slave girl's eyes, as the gemstone is the exact same color. He tries to concentrate on the job at hand as Ibrahim approached to ask if he wants anything. He says that he will be working, and that he may leave. He says, "Tomorrow is your first council meeting; everybody wonders what kind of decisions you are going to be making." He smiles meaningfully, and mischievously and looks at Ibrahim: "Do you think the world is ready for my decisions? Are the Ottomans ready, Ibrahim?" Ibrahim smiles bows down and leaves. He continues working on the ring.

In a different scene, we encounter performative masculinity, where Ibrahim picks harem women for him, and lets him know that he made sure not to miss Alexandra:

Ibrahim lets the Sultan know that he has picked girls for the Sultan, and adds, "the one who fainted when she saw you is among them." Sultan Süleyman is looking away, but he is visibly happy, indicated by a smirk. Süleyman asks, "You didn't talk to her, did you? Ibrahim replies, "How would I dare your majesty? Of course not, Sümbül Aga, the eunuch has told me how she was brought from Crimea."

Like the way Sultan Süleyman has existential post-sex thoughts, Ibrahim has quite a bit of inner monologues in the first episodes to show us the complexity of his character, and give a glimpse of the inner turmoil of a successful statesman. Even though Giddens (1991) attributed reflexivity to postmodern subjects, the inner monologues of these

historical TV personas are not short of musings of a reflexive individual. Giddens argues that reflexivity "is characteristic of all human action, and is… an intrinsic component of modernity. All human beings continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities as a feature of doing what they do, and such monitoring always has discursive features" (Giddens 1991, 36). Today, these inner reflexive monologues prevalent throughout the series seem to reflect our modern anxieties more than anything else. They are complex, and these characters seem to construct who they are in an autobiographical way. They become anxious with the prospect of not having a linear biography, and remember their convoluted and multicultural beginnings.

> *Ibrahim stands on the palace balcony, and has his fair share of life-questioning inner pondering: He sighs and thinks, "I am Ibrahim, the son of a Rum fisherman Manolis of Parga, and a Venetian woman named Sofia. Ibrahim of Parga, who was recruited, and converted at the age of ten. What was my name? What my name meant in what language, I forgot. Forgetting frees you. Or else, the language of your given name, the soil you learned to walk on, does not leave your heart."*

His majesty disrupts these thoughts as he steps out of the room to take fresh air. Ibrahim looks disturbed with the burden of his thoughts. The Sultan asks if anything is bothering him, if he has a wish? "What could I wish for my majesty?" Your magnificent person has honored me with a new duty, [you made me your *hasodabaşı* tonight.], what else could I ask for?" Suleyman goes: "But I do have a wish." "Your wish is a command," says Ibrahim. "It is long overdue that you built a family," replies the Sultan. Romantic music drops, and Ibrahim says, "I already have a family." Sultan Süleyman pretends to be angry and asks, "What do you mean, did you build a family without my consent?" Ibrahim asks, "You once told me, you are my brother. Am I not so anymore?" Süleyman answers, "If I had a chance to choose a brother, I would choose you." And pats him on the shoulder, the

two smiling and looking into each other's eyes. After exiting your highness' presence Ibrahim goes on with his thoughts in the long corridors of the palace:

> *I am Ibrahim the convert, conscripted from Parga, at the age of ten. What is it like to convert [to turn], what do you turn to [convert to]? Where does one turn to? Where is it that one turns in? Is there any turning back? Is it possible? Or does the destiny only point forward? Is there, where you turned from, where you came from still there? Does it wait for you? Would you be able to see it if you looked? Does your heart become your compass when you are turning? Can you go back home, without forgetting the roads you travelled from? Or are you still only a "convert" in there where you think you turned to, and changed to, in that language, and in that religion you said you converted to? Is converting not a talent but a requirement, Ibrahim?*

These inner musings give the characters' fluidity, and ambiguity. As the Ottoman is coded as Muslim in the Turkish public, these character depictions disrupt the long-held assumptions about the nature of the palace and the empire. Ibrahim is a multicultural and complex personality, Valide Sultan herself speaks Russian, and Hürrem, the new favorite dreamt of Christ her first night under the Ottoman dome. Where does this leave the audience? Even though the interviews and the general public chatter crystallized in the disbelief of how much cleavage the palace women flaunted, the discord had more to do with this titillating encounter with the multicultural past, and an unease with converts who might still be missing home, or who might be in a secret alliance with Christ. Furthermore, the background of these characters also has the potential of directing attention to the convoluted roots of Turkishness. Beyond the unease with cleavages, lies a deep anxiety with a complex heritage.

Luxury and Consumption

The show displays immense riches, ornate clothing and exquisitely decorated rooms with luxurious carpets and furniture. It offers a delightful spectacle. "FranStar," a

YouTube viewer from Argentina, says, “One of the best soap operas I´ve ever seen, all details are so beautifully taken care of, most scenes are like ancient paintings in motion, the acting, the dresses the jewelries, the music, the plot, all so well done, here in Argentina it was a total rating success.” Similarly, one of my interviewees, an aspiring script writer herself, told me that the whole show was a long commercial. In line with this, the production boosted and encouraged consumption of history. Jewelry was of the most significant consumption areas alongside the furniture, kitchen gadgets, hair products, Turkish delights, exquisite hammam visits, and home decor. The sale of jewelry was particularly successful as Suleyman is depicted as a jeweler, frequently making rings and other jewelry in many scenes. People in the palace are constantly exchanging jewelry pieces, giving them as gifts, picking jewelry, and wearing assortment of different items in throughout the many episodes. One cannot but notice the different types of jewelry as most of the episodes are shaped around them. The ring that Suleyman gives Hürrem as a gift becomes a scandal, it is stolen, Mahidevran beats Hürrem for it, it is found to be stolen again in different episodes. Süleyman’s mother gives Hürrem a necklace to celebrate her childbirth. Ibrahim Pasha secretly sends a brooch to his lover, and there are countless scenes where women choose pieces from a selection of jewelry. The series even caused a court battle on sponsorship between the most powerful jewelry producers in Turkey, showing how the show created a flourishing domestic, Middle Eastern and Arab market for these items.

My informants were opinioned on jewelry consumption. Gülfem, a forty-nine-year-old practicing Muslim woman told me in 2012, “I really like the jewelry in the show. I think that especially after this TV series people are into Ottoman jewelry. The

jewels are really beautiful! They are so splendid and gorgeous. But maybe they should not put that much jewelry in the show. I am not sure, maybe the jewelry is a bit too much up front?" When I asked her why people would buy items with the Ottoman theme she replied:

> [T]hat person in question who buys such items with the Ottoman theme probably likes the character in the TV series a lot and wants to remember that character in her everyday life. Maybe he or she wants to become more integrated with that person. That can be the reason why one buys such stuff.

She meditated on the question "Why would someone buy Hürrem ring?" and went on to say, "Probably to feel like Hürrem, like if Hürrem wears it I want to wear it too." She giggled and continued,

> You know what, let me tell you something interesting. At that time the *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* was not broadcasted… My daughter and my husband gifted me a set of jewelry, a ring, a necklace and earrings. After the TV series have become popular my daughter started teasing me. Oh mum you are so lucky; you are like Hürrem. But my jewelry has nothing to do with the show! They bought the set before the show was even popular. I could not wear them for a period. Now I wear it when I go out with my close friends. I don't want to look like I am trying to look like Hürrem, but they bought it before the show!

Gülfem, who is fond of the styles, still felt embarrassed to be consuming something luxurious, and was anxious not to be read as imitating something she has seen on TV. Furthermore, as a modest homemaker, and the wife of a carpenter, she did not want to look like a lavish consumer. Ayse, forty, informed me similarly that she really liked the Hürrem ring in the beginning and wanted to buy one, yet gave up on the idea once she realized it was becoming mainstream. She said, "My sister-in-law has made my brother buy one of those rings, one of the real and expensive ones, shocking! Honestly, it looks very different than the one she saw at the local bazaar." I asked her what she thought of

it. She said, “My sister-in-law is always into pretentious things. She had her kitchen done exactly after a kitchen she saw on a magazine’s cover.”

For my informants it was not very easy to be blunt about their desires in gemstones, they could not be as open as the YouTube commentator “Khadeejatu yartakawa Al-nijeriyya,” who asked “Please where can I get these regalia from? The ones they're wearing.”

Authenticity

The complex characters of Meral Okay, and conspicuous consumption depicted resulted in a general disbelief. Hence, one of the main themes in the public debates surrounding the show related to its historical inaccuracies. Within this context, the popular history magazine *NTV Tarih* dedicated an entire issue to historical accuracy, providing extended information on Ottoman society in the sixteenth century. *NTV Tarih’s* fact-checking identified mistakes such as the exact date of when Suleyman and his love, concubine and later wife Hürrem met, that Suleyman looks older than Suleyman when he came to power, and that Suleyman was without a beard when he came to the throne! Harem was still in the old palace—and not everyone could enter this strictly controlled space. The non-Muslim, non-Ottoman Turkish speaking slaves could not enter the imperial inner harem before they were properly educated. Beginning from Mehmed the 2nd’s reign, Sultans did not actively participate in the divan meetings but watched it from outside. It was forbidden to look Suleiman the Magnificent in the eye! Suleyman did not sit at a table with a globe! The list goes on. *NTV Tarih’s* “objective” look at the historical inaccuracies stand in a spectrum of a general anxiety around history, and actually acts as

an opener to deeply embedded tensions around sexuality, gender, religion, heritage, and national identity.

During my first round of interviews in 2012, respondents claimed that popular culture waters down "historical truth" and disseminates a "false history." Most of my respondents paired their criticisms of bad history with arguments relating to guilty pleasures. These respondents coupled reports of their own enjoyment of Ottomania with claims that these very products of popular culture are harmful for others. Even staunch critics of popular representations of Ottoman history are quick to point out that historical truth would not sell. One common refrain, a pleasure-centered defense of popular culture, was that television series are not documentaries. Barbaros, a practicing Muslim and supporter of the ruling AKP, refuses to expose his children to The Magnificent Century, while simultaneously acknowledging the show's allure. His concern relates primarily to others' misinterpretations: "They are not making a documentary here. I mean, this is fiction. I am critical of this because some people confuse it with reality." If Sultans were depicted as moral individuals and if television dramas emphasized Islamic conservatism, he adds, "of course nobody would watch them." Audiences in Turkey enjoy Ottomania with their cultural shields up. Combining a social view of historical degeneration with an individual view of pleasure, consumers of Ottomania absolve their immersion in popular culture, believing that their critical stance makes them impervious to intrusions of the so-called "false history." For them, it is others who are not as aware who are at risk. In line with this, Barbaros was briefly flustered when he tried to combine arguments about individual pleasure and social harm:

> Interviewer: You said you watch The Magnificent Century. Do you like it?
> Barbaros: No!
> Interviewer: Do you mean you watch it even though you don't like it?
> Barbaros: I know it's an absurd answer, but technically it's a very good television series. When you look at it as a film, when you look at the costumes and the continuity of the script, it's truly a solid series. And it attracts a lot of attention… But obviously I have serious objections to its script [content]. We call it fiction, but it's not that simple. When you depict a character in it, that's how that character remains in people's eyes (Ergin and Karakaya, 2017).

The most frequently questioned issue was revealing clothing. Gülfem, a homemaker from İstanbul, gave the task of controlling female sexuality to the Sultan: "Let's think about those times. The Sultans are really pious individuals. They wouldn't let their wives be seen in the palace by strangers. But [in The Magnificent Century] Hürrem appears to others as if she just got out of bed. This shouldn't be so […] This sexuality, these low-cut and revealing outfits, these are too extreme." Similar to Gülfem, Nigar, a college-educated homemaker in Kayseri who votes for parties representing the Islamist National Vision (Millî Görüş) position, questioned the historical accuracy and moral appropriateness of the costumes the women of the palace wear in the show: "First of all, these outfits are too revealing. I don't know if they could be dressed in this way in a country where Sharia was in effect." By articulating their concerns about the depiction of the Ottoman palace women, my respondents are not only talking about history, but also signaling where they stand with regard to gender roles, women's sexuality, and moral boundaries.

Berlant and Werner define cultural intimacy as "the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavior, a space of pure citizenship.... A familial model of society displaces

the recognition of structural racism and other systemic inequalities" (Berlant and Warner 1998; Stokes 2010:549). According to Martin Stokes, Berlant further complicates this notion seeing cultural intimacy "as a space of tension, of competing and antagonistic claims" (Stokes 2010:32). Thus, anxiety surrounds intimacy, the ever-intensifying efforts to secure its meanings, and the repetitious evocation of threats to it (Stokes 2010:33). Herzfeld defines it as a rueful self-recognition, "a recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation" (Herzfeld 2005:3–6). When thought through a lens of cultural intimacy, it is probably not that paradoxical that The Magnificent Century was possibly the most popular and the most disdained television series at the same time. The public is torn between "the history I like," which refers to popular depictions of history for pleasure, and "proper history," a discourse of historical "truth" that many feel is under attack by a pleasure-oriented popular culture. Perceptions of "proper" history shape the ways individuals negotiate the tensions between the pleasures of popular culture and their own sense of what correct history is or should be.

The show touched on multiple anxieties and sources of embarrassment deeply embedded, and relationally articulated, by the Turkish public. The first one has to do with a complex heritage, a general anxiety around conversion. If the sacred Sultans, and the highly revered torchbearers of Islam, themselves are the sons of converts and former Christians, where does that leave us, the general public? The second one pertains to

gender, and the unease around the display of "mahram," the secret and private harem—which was at times full of Shakespearean tragedy (Peirce 1993), pursuit of power, and "mentally unstable women." For a segment of Turks, it's not only the women's cleavage that is hard to watch, but also women fighting for power, and ultimately ruling the empire. It seems hard for the public not to mourn one of the commonly cited reasons for the decline of the empire; "palace women gained too much power." The third anxiety emerges through an encounter with emotions, especially the Sultan's, who has an active sexual appetite, beyond the duty of producing male heirs, who falls in love and changes the law based on that rule. It's important to remember that the Anglican church came into being around the same time, as Henry VIII "came up with a new church," when the Pope denied him annulment. Yes, rules do change based on the matters of heart, and sometimes love makes the law.

Conclusion

In this chapter I engaged with the deep complexities of these historic characters' fluid inner life worlds as depicted through the modern lens of *The Magnificent Century*. I explored core sensibilities pertaining to Ottomania to argue that these characters' ambivalent pasts, and ambiguous personalities resulting from conversion from Christianity to Islam pose a threat to neo-Ottomanism's essentialist interpretations of personhood. Questioning why the Oriental self-gaze induced such strong and divided reactions regarding agentic and sexualized women, authenticity and conspicuous luxury, I claim that conspicuous consumption, the constant meditation of the converts, and constant competition between the palace women, congealed into a private feminized

sphere—which disturbed the audience because the “Ottoman” was essentially coded as a masculine public domain. Finally, I claimed that the series contributed to a cultural intimacy—a sense of togetherness that can result from a common object of embarrassment—the act of peeking into one’s ancestors’ bedroom practices, implying a genealogy not as pure as one once thought.

CHAPTER 4

The Conquest of Hearts: Spectacular Nostalgia within AKP's Authoritarian Populism

The central role of neo-Ottoman nostalgia for the AKP's authoritarian populist project reached its apex at the 2016 annual rally commemorating the conquest of Constantinople (Conquest Rally hereafter), where over a million Istanbulites gathered under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The massive rally –one of many throughout the year– combined the latest technology, such as laser light shows and high volume bombastic music through loudspeakers, with Ottoman elements, such as the military marching band and virtual neighing and galloping horses, to create a carnivalesque political scene. The rally—a perfect example of neo-Ottomanism, emphasized the Ottoman Islamic civilization as the source of Turkish heritage, and attempted to bind citizens to the nation with an imperial narrative, and showcased its core sensibilities (Çinar and Taş 2017)).

Interestingly, both nostalgia and populism are often criticized by scholars and commentators as the opium of the masses, because they both prioritize emotion over cognition (Jansen 2011; Kenny 2017). I argue that populist mobilization today, increasingly relies on Spectacular Nostalgia and core sensibilities that come with it, because nostalgia boosts the authenticity claim that social performances (Alexander 2011) seek to achieve. My focus on the rally that encapsulates both phenomena shows

how, like many other forms of politics, populist nostalgia mobilizes both emotions and reflexive cognition to shape political engagement.[13]

> The new vein of populism studies is against rendering populism as a regime type and rejects pejorative conceptions of the term. Instead, scholars see it as a political style (Bonikowski 2016; Bonikowski and Gidron 2016), a set of distinct claims with an inner logic (Müller 2016) and as a mode of political mobilization (Jansen 2011), emphasizing the central role of spectacle, valorization of ordinary people and relationality between the leader and the audience (Moffitt 2016). I subscribe to this new vision of populism, which enables a clear diagnosis of contemporary Turkish authoritarianism; the *antipluralist* monopoly over the claim to represent the "people" against the "elite," exclusionary rhetoric (and ultimately exclusionary actions) through a *moralistic imagination of politics* (Müller 2016), and a Manichean vision of the world that relies on dualities such as "enemies" against the "nation," "us" versus "them" (de la Torre 2000).

In this chapter I use the Conquest Rally, to examine the characteristics of Spectacular Nostalgia—well paired with populism, and propose a theoretical perspective that puts social performance (Alexander 2011) at the core. According to social performance theory (Alexander and Smith 1993; Alexander 2011), leaders need to produce authentic, emotionally engaging social performances to gain the approval of audiences. While interpreting the rally, I analyzed populist techniques at work, which

[13] For a discussion of cognition, emotion and perception see Craig Calhoun, Putting Emotions in their Place in Goodwin, Jeff, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Poletta. (2001). *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

made visible the rally's emotional mechanism, bringing the content, dialogue and emotions between Erdogan, the most important and powerful *actor* at the rally, and the *audience*, to the fore (Karakaya 2018). I analyzed the *collective representation* in the *script* by coding for the themes of conquest, binary structures such as us vs. them, past vs. future, and enemies vs. friends. Coding for core sensibilities included looking at feeling inducing factors such as the scene decor, music, laser show, and flying jets, which also underlined *mise-en-scène* and *symbolic production*. Centering the political leader as the main actor or performer of populism, and the focus of the affect (Moffitt 2016:52) helped me "explain the appeal of leaders of their followers, without reducing the latter's behavior to either manipulation or irrational and anomic action or to a utilitarian nationalism" (de la Torre 2000:1). The rally proves neo-Ottomanism is a central resource in creating the binary oppositions on which populism so heavily relies by claiming a continuous and compelling past, which promises to guide contemporary Turkey into its glorious future, with a leader who is posited as a savior—the true heir of Mehmed the Conqueror (Fatih).

In the second half, by relying on forty-five in depth interviews in five cities, I investigate the extent to which this nostalgic performance convinces my informants. This is a central tenet of my dissertation—understanding how people interpret nostalgic forms, and get interpellated to different degrees. Three interpretative perspectives emerged from participants' response: *Spectacle Seekers* see the rallies as a necessity and as providing emotional uplift as the state's duty; *Appraising Skeptics* approve the commemoration, yet are skeptical of the authenticity of the effort; and *History Guardians* deem the Ottoman past as sacred and regard AKP's use of it as emotional manipulation. The last two

clusters, *Appraising Skeptics*, and *History Guardians* underline the tension between a strong hegemonic nostalgia, neo-Ottomanism, and political authoritarianism. As the Ottoman past became further sacralized by the cultural work of AKP, people start to question "emotional manipulation" by the regime using this holly past. I argue that populism and Spectacular Nostalgia work well together on a discursive level, yet, this does not mean that this paired discourse appeals to the public or the *audience* homogenously. On the personal level, only some buy into this rhetoric, countering the popular assumptions regarding nostalgia and populism's superpowers of sweeping the masses away.

Historicizing the Conquest Rally

The 1990s saw the first full manifestations of the neo-Ottoman spirit in public and local governance. By 1994, with Erdogan winning the mayoral election of Istanbul, the narrative of the re-conquest of Istanbul made its first appearance. Beginning with 1996, major commemorations marked the conquest, not organized by the state but by several youth organizations, and —at least before it was shut down—the Islamist Refah Party (RP). Necmettin Erbakan was then at the forefront, with the newly elected mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan, standing by his side as a rising star. At a large soccer stadium, the commemoration of the conquest served as a moment to celebrate RP's victory in local elections as well as to remember the conquest of Constantinople, an achievement people claim was foretold and praised by the Prophet Mohammed. Erbakan claimed, "Like in many other metropolitan areas, RP has won the local elections in Istanbul, the center of the world. Now Istanbul has been entrusted to devout people once again." He said "After 541 years, Istanbul has been re-conquered, I am grateful to god who has made this

possible." RP continued the commemorations for four years until the party was shut down.

Unlike the earlier small-scale commemorations, populated by a few army officials and characterized by a formal and sincere recognition of the military success of Fatih, this version involved a strong mobilized audience, predominantly the youth (Brockett 2014; Çınar 2005). Moreover, it was highly performative, involving a Fatih on his white horse, a group of mock soldiers schlepping a ship on concrete, reenacting the conquering army's masculine hard work marshalled by Fatih's genius (Çınar 2005). A Byzantine woman presented flowers to Fatih, people prayed collectively, a Turkish flag was raised on the city walls after a mock surrender, firecrackers were lit, and of course the military marching band performed (Çınar 2005).

This moment arguably marks the beginning of neo-Ottoman nostalgia. The rally was so influential that the 2016 commemoration rally was also a reenactment of this particular instance, after twenty years – this time dominated, perfected, and successfully hegemonized by the state. The AKP has reinvigorated these celebrations by institutionalizing them. The unprecedented scale of the 2016 commemoration was a culmination of this tradition, this time featuring Erdogan at the very center. Artificial city walls served as a stage screen, allegedly the biggest in the world so far. The program, broadcasted live on TV, lasted almost six hours, climaxing with a three-dimensional laser light tale of the conquest. During the day, multiple speeches, including Erdogan's, built on the theme of continuous conquest, expanding the meaning of the word to encompass winning hearts. At night, city walls were shattered, destroyed, and conquered over and over again thanks to the latest 3D projection technology. In the following sections I

provide an analysis of the commemoration, focusing on the core sensibilities generated during the rally.

Conquerors, Saviors and Grandchildren

Erdogan landed on the rally grounds in his white helicopter, resembling Mehmed the Conqueror's (Fatih) entrance into Istanbul on his white horse. As he saluted the audience, walking down the turquoise carpeted stage, the announcer declared his arrival like a town crier:

> Istanbul! Here comes the protector of the oppressed, hope of the poor, the strong voice of the underdogs, child of the nation, here comes the fearless advocate of the just cause, grandson of Fatih, apple of the ummah's eye, architect of new Turkey, servant of the nation, president of the republic!

Erdogan walked smilingly around the janissaries as the military marching band debuted its first song. He began his speech by saluting the "precious Istanbul, beloved Istanbulites, weeping and destitute cities of the region," and congratulated the 563rd year of the conquest that began a new historical age. "God bless Mehmed the Conqueror, his spiritual guides, his army who conquered the promised city, god bless our soldiers who fight everyday so Istanbul can remain ours!" Both the announcer's expressions and Erdogan's greetings underlined the side Erdogan took for the [oppressed] people.

Istanbulites gathered in the square, cheered and clapped to Erdogan's promise of transforming "the new Turkey" into one of the ten biggest economies in the world. Calling the crowd, the "grandchildren of Mehmed the Conqueror," he said:

> Enemies who are still jealous of Turkey for the conquest of Constantinople, should be defeated on a daily basis by continuing the conquest on the economic and cultural realm, by building a new Turkey." He continued: "Dear god please grant us the right to conquer hearts on a daily basis, dear god let the call to

> prayers echo in this city till the judgment day, protect your shield over Istanbul till the last day.

The metaphor "conquest of hearts" is a wish for political legitimation, which is anchored in 1453, and operates through ritualistic rallies. Erdogan's wish to conquer hearts is a wish to govern through emotional means, which works through appealing to the hearts of the citizens regularly, making them believe in the national project over and over again. But, what else do the audience and the actor talk about during this hyper-emotional spectacle, what does the "conqueror of the hearts" say so people are convinced once again?

> Revenge and settling of the Conquest still continues after 563 years, and it will continue as long as our flag remains waving on this soil. People don't grasp the true meaning of the conquest, conquest is often perceived as a process marked by death and blood, but this is not the case, conquest is about a twenty-one-year-old sultan bringing the West to its knees, it is about setting roots on a continent, lifting up the flag that was dropped in Andalusia. There is no exodus from neither Anatolia nor Thrace for us. Nobody is strong enough to uproot us from this land. Those who wage war in the Southeast, their concern is not our Kurdish brothers, or the region. They still want to avenge the conquest. Those who set those enemies upon us will face the same fate… Inshallah[14] by 2023 we will transform Turkey in one of the ten biggest economies in the world.

In this passage from his speech, Erdogan reminds us of the interrelated dichotomies the world: the winners and losers, oppressors and the oppressed, West vs. East, and uses the dog-whistle Islam vs. Christianity. He defines the moral path to be victorious in this setting: having a good economy and vigilance against "those who set the enemies on us." Even though he does not specify it clearly, from his metaphor of the West on its knees, we can deduce that the enemy might be the "vast West" that meddles

[14] · Translated as god-willing.

with “our country.” Yet, this enemy is still quite vague and unidentifiable, thus designating the relationship between Erdogan and the audience as the sole safe space in a world that has “always” been marked by hostility and danger against “us.” We are invited to embark on a journey with the motto: “us against the world.” AKP’s populist rhetoric, therefore, both reproduces and strengthens multiple inter-related binary categories (Bonikowski and Gidron 2016). Core emotions such as determination, persistence and vigilance provide the mechanism through which these populist and nostalgic dichotomies are constructed, maintained and bound.

He pauses and gives an overview of what Turkey has accomplished in the thirteen years of his/their rule to become an independent economic power against all the odds, in spite of the setbacks he claims the West has caused. “We don’t have any friends except ourselves!” He cries in a higher tone. “Have we finished building the Osman Gazi Bridge?” Yes, the crowd answers his rhetorical question, while he announces that the bridge will open soon. “Turkey is proud of you!” the crowd cheers now. He responds back: “We are proud of you, we are proud of you,

Thank you!” He concludes with the good news of starting construction of the best airport in the world. “Who would have thought my brothers? We for sure undertook a lot!” This courting dialogue between the audience and Erdogan where the parties pamper and recognize each other’s worth and accomplishments further affirms their bond.

Pierre Ostiguy (2017) argues that a particular form of political relationship between political leaders and a social base characterizes populism. The commemoration exemplifies the aspects of populist discourse that Ostiguy mentions: relationality between

the crowd and the leader, the reproduction of the nefarious other(s), and the leader being the sole protector and provider of eschatological redemption:

> Those who think we are not deserving of these accomplishments, the ones in our country -you know who- they can't even reach what we have actively actually accomplished, even in their dreams. In the world there are those who like us, and who don't like us… There are also our sister and brother countries who are going through similar problems, and we are their only hope. So what are we going to do? We will both look after ourselves and them right? Because that is what would suit us, the grandchildren of Fatih, right?

Getting inspiration from Fatih, whose legacy according to Erdogan is taking care of the needy, the audience gets anchored in 15th century history. Like Fatih, the audience is destined to be there for the oppressed, and help those in need. And people, probably those who are not Fatih's grandchildren, cannot even dream what "they" have accomplished. He continues with claiming how he takes the inspiration from Mehmed the Conqueror, "who all by himself conquered Constantinople and also laid out future plans":

> Fatih did everything himself, designed the artillery, made the plans and conquered Istanbul. If it was not for that spirit, he could have walked away from Istanbul. But, he did not. We did not either, we have accomplished the most unprecedented mobilization in economic development. My ancestors have laid out the project for me, why would not we follow their orders? So we did and we built the Marmaray tube under Bosphorus. One hundred-thirty-million Istanbulites crossed the Bosphorus using the tube since then! Well, we won't stop, next, we are opening the Avrasya tunnel, why? So, Istanbul has a healthy transportation system. Next, is the city hospitals!

By underlying how Fatih did everything himself, he suggests that acting as a strong and solo leader is the legitimate way to pursue politics. If Turkey wants to be successful as a nation it should follow a strong leader, following the example set by Fatih. Here, we see a persona of a continuously oppressed, yet immensely caring savior, who not only looks after himself, but also becomes the hope of other, oppressed people who

are less able. He designates the enemies for the crowd, and, in case he misses one, the crowd helps him. People get excited with him, his cause seems to become their cause, and this most exciting day probably will become a memory that they will not forget. He also underlines over and over how much public transportation projects the regime was able to undertake—an accomplishment, as the next chapter will highlight, the museum-goers present their gratitude constantly. As citizens seek out that effervescence they had once, again and again, they may go to the next rally, and, if he invites them out to streets during an attempted coup, they might take it to the streets to help him. Or, they might simply choose to vote for him on the next election (Karakaya 2018).

Effervescence in Commemoration Rallies

The collective effervescence at the commemoration ritual came in waves, and was enhanced through technological means bolstering the *mise-en-scène*. Uplifting music in very high volumes, cheering, visual effects, and the presence of over a million bodies radiating energy reinforced the content of his and others' speeches. Right after Erdogan's speech the "Turkish Stars" flew their jet planes over the crowd in an aerobatic show, with their deafening sounds and red and white smoke. "When I watch them fly, my blood pressure rises, I get teary eyed. I can't pray enough for these pilots, truly Masha Allah!" uttered a TV announcer for example. On the screen Erdogan and his wife were presented, watching the planes, smiling. Two famous actors starring in a state sponsored Ottoman drama series, *Resurrection Ertugrul* (Chapter 6), read emotional poems in period costumes, with a very serious tone, augmented by bombastic music. After this, the 563-member Ottoman military marching band plays, encouraging the crowd. Their

marches use distinct beats played with instruments such as clarions, drums, and cymbals to naturally uplift and fire one's spirit as they were once created to hearten Ottoman soldiers during war. As the day moved to night, this date with the past, present and the future climaxes in the 3D laser light show depicting the conquest, providing an open air movie experience for a million people.

When five jets fly in very close proximity emanating sounds and smokes, or when the artificial city walls get shattered over and over in front of you, it is hard to not feel anything. The audience members might feel elevated, their heart might beat faster, their eyes might tear up, they might shudder. Why does one feel this way? In other words, what is the link between feelings and meaning-laden emotions? Erdogan's spectacular performance provides the scripted content, so it becomes easier to make the metaphorical leap from collective effervescence, or feelings to meaning-laden emotions, such as anger at the jealous enemies, hope for the future, being fearless in the face of adversities, being conquered through love, feeling safe in a hostile world, being proud of your nation and the past, and ultimately finding eschatological redemption. Erdogan provides a scripted meaning, filling populist nostalgia with the amalgam of the strong emotions, and "performative power," which depends on "producing a compelling, arresting, and existentially and politically encompassing narrative" combined with the technologies of enhanced reality (Alexander, 2011, p. 150). In a nutshell, the jets give you the feelings, and the effervescence in a spectacular setting. But, without Erdogan's compelling "performative power," which Jeffrey Alexander defines as "a cathartic moral experience," (2011) emotions imbued with meaning would not be there (Karakaya 2018).

The Sandwich Method: Enemies, Accomplishments, Enemies

Back at Erdogan's speech, he rehearses another round of enemies: The Gezi protestors who have allegedly written "Torture has begun in 1453" on a wall, the METU students, dressed as Byzantine soldiers who have fought the Turkish police, the terrorist organization PKK, which "targets the mosques", Assad, Iran, occasionally US soldiers, and the list continues. The reason [of their animosity] is, he says, "people still can't stomach the thousand-year-old civilization we have…Their goal is to block Turkey's communication with the Middle East and North Africa" This antagonistic depiction is in line with Jan-Werner Müller's (2016) diagnosis that populists in office continue to polarize and prepare the people apocalyptic confrontation. They seek to moralize political conflict as much as possible by using multiple enemies. After the count of enemies, the audience is bombarded again by a new cycle of economic aims and goals with a look back on the Mehmed the Conqueror's strategic thinking during his reign. He goes: "Fatih did not march to Istanbul when he first came to rule. He waited till he was ready and strong enough. Turkey is preparing itself too, preparing itself to 2023, to the centennial, when we will say: new Turkey, new constitution, new system of governance!"

Then, Erdogan asks the crowd if they are tired, the crowd yells "NO", encouraging him to move to the recitation of RABIA, a sign of his support to Muslim Brotherhood. But, in this context RABIA becomes something specific, as he adapts it to the Turkish national context: "We need to take care of our RABIA": holding his four fingers up, he recites: "First, we are going to be one nation, as Turk, Kurd, Laz, Circassian, Georgian, Arab, seventy-nine million, one nation. Second, we will have one

flag: red symbolizing the blood of our martyrs, star, the martyr himself. This is one unique flag; no one has a flag like this" he then claims sentimentally:

> Third, one fatherland secured by our martyrs, do we have martyrs? Sure we do, thus we have a fatherland. Fourth: one state! … "A party" yesterday has held a congress, no flags, no national anthem… Can these people be the children of this nation? "some of the MPs" held speeches at this congress…We know where "these people" belong. They have one task! They need to stop fighting, leave their arms, bury their guns, pour concrete over it, give us the coordinates. If not, they are going to leave this country, no other way out!

Even though a second ago he indicated a wish to be one nation with the Kurds, openly equating the Kurdish majority party (HDP) with PKK, he then antagonizes the audience against Kurds. This distinct style of not naming names, not mentioning the party, saying 'you know who I am talking about' instead of who, and subtle smiles, all create a sense of mystery and a form of communication regarding esoteric knowledge between Erdogan and his listeners. With secrets, a coded language, and facial cues that only they recognize; Erdogan and his listeners bond through sharing ever-multiplying conspiracies and enemies through their neo-Ottoman populist tale.

He concludes by saying: "As you remember, we also have a song", and begins to recite a popular song from the 90s, also a widely used soccer chant, in a sentimental poem format:

> We walked together on this path
> We got rained on together
> Now in every song I listen to
> There is a bit of you
> Everything reminds me of you
> Erdogan adds: Everything reminds me of Turkey! Let our day be blessed! Let the 563rd year of the conquest be blessed! Dear god, grant us the right to conquer new hearts!

Finishing off with a love song reminds the audience the romantic bond between them. The leader here signals care by relying on the toolkit of "love." He does not only conquer with force, but he conquers efficiently with songs that have built-in connotations proven by their decades old presence in the Turkish sound-scape. People know this song because they have listened to it when they had heartache, they know it because they heard it as a strong soccer chant at stadiums and TV. Hence, the lyrics have the power to activate already embodied feelings, and when the leader pairs it with his message, authenticity is approximated more seamlessly.

The Conquest Rally's nostalgic commemoration unites the power of the "people" with a leader posited as savior and symbol of redemption. This ritual allows "participation in a political machine that does more than assure the delivery of goods and services, but provides a symbolic dimension to this exchange" (de la Torre 2000, p. 21). By positing Erdogan as a savior like Mehmed the Conqueror, a messianic figure in Islam, it taps into religious sentiments, thus creating a compelling link to that cultural backdrop. His typically populist Manichean vision unfolds like nesting Russian dolls, pointing not only to cleavages within the nation, but also to many intricately tangled global enemies. The content of the speech emphasizes the power of people legitimated by their Ottoman ancestry. It is laden with conspiracy theories which date back to the conquest, and "creates binary categories of us vs. them," with a deep historicity (Bonikowski, 2016, p. 22). Erdogan equates himself with Mehmed the Conqueror, who, according to him, "undertook every aspect of the conquest himself". He becomes the contemporary embodiment of Fatih, standing alone against the world, and shifting politics into moral or

eschatological redemption (Alexander, 2011; de la Torre, 2000). By positing Turkey as surrounded by enemies, yet still succeeding, Erdogan hints at a higher force informed by Turkey's holy past, protecting and guiding it to its almost eschatological economic, social and political redemption.

With the power of enhanced reality technologies such as a massive laser light show, bombastic military marching band music through loud speakers, love songs and the presence of popular TV heroes during the rallies, a contemporary form of collective effervescence is created in this "spectacular" setting (2012). These moments of collective effervescence help the populist-nostalgic message get through, which further feeds into neo-Ottoman hegemony, linking people to the leader and the nation, through emotions such as pride, anger, hope, safety, determination and love. Does the spirit of conquest dazzle everyone to the same extent? Does everyone find the rally authentic, as a successful social performance would require? This contingent relationship needs to be brought to the fore to better understand how nostalgia in populist rhetoric works for those on receiving end of the message.

Reception of the Commemoration

I have identified three interpretative perspectives on the reception of the conquest rally from which my respondents draw: Spectacle Seekers, Appraising Skeptics, and History Guardians. These three perspectives lie on a spectrum, where Spectacle Seekers are the most enthusiastic about the rally and believe that it is one of the duties of the nation state to provide uplifting spectacles. Appraising Skeptics recognize this role but are skeptical about the means and ends of the commemoration. History Guardians are the most critical,

and quick to condemn the rally as a means of playing with people's innocent emotions. It is important to note here that I see these perspectives as ideal types, and interviewees sometimes have views that cut across two perspectives. (The line between Appraising Skeptics and Spectacle Seekers is permeable, but there is no one who would draw from both a History Guardian and Spectacle Seeker perspective at the same time.)

My interviews suggest that Istanbul, the metropole, and Ankara, the capital, are the most diverse in terms of the distribution of the three clusters. Based on the interviews, Izmir, the predominantly secular city, did not have any Spectacle Seekers, and no interviewee in the Black Sea region's Trabzon was a History Guardian. Kayseri in the heartlands had the staunchest Spectacle Seekers and History Guardians. Spectacle Seekers were predominantly AKP supporters, while none of the History Guardians supported AKP and instead came from political backgrounds with very different visions regarding history, such as the CHP, Saadet Party and HDP.[15] Appraising Skeptics had a wide range of political leanings. Contrary to the commonly held belief that populists predominantly came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, my data did not indicate that. In line with more recent work on American populism (McQuarrie 2017), all three interpretative clusters were exhibited by people from different class backgrounds. What all three groups show us is that engagement with populist practices involves both emotional and cognitive aspects that result in perceptions, rather than populism being a

[15] The CHP, which translates as Republican People's Party, represents the Kemalist center left to right-wing. HDP translates as the People's Democratic Party, and is the successor of HADEP and DTP, both Kurdish nationalist leftist parties. Saadet Party (SP) is the Islamist heir of the Welfare Party. When the Welfare Party was shut down, one of the two factions formed the contemporary AKP, and the other the SP. See Tuğal (2009, 2016).

moment of being swept away by “irrational” emotions. Moreover, the embracement of the Ottoman past by the wider population shows the success of the process of socialization to an Ottoman past through AKP’s neo-Ottomanist practices. Yet, as the Appraising Skeptics and History Guardians highlight, the hegemonic neo-Ottomanist view of the past has become bigger than the people who summoned it. A segment of the population now views the AKP’s use of Ottoman history, which it has contributed to make hegemonic, as exploitation of an almost holy past. They disdain ‘playing with people’s emotions that are directed to the Ottoman history to gain electoral leverage.’

Spectacle Seekers

I call the first perspective Spectacle Seekers. These enthusiasts viewed the commemorations in a positive light, often emphasizing how proud they felt about the conquest, explaining the emotional upheaval they went through while attending the commemoration or watching it on TV. This group, which makes up a third of my interviewees, saw the celebration as necessary to keep the spirit of conquest alive, and the state as a legitimate provider of emotions. These accounts highlight that people are aware of the emotional mobilization that spectacles foster and importantly, they seek such emotion out. Given that we live in an age of virtual spectacles available to stream, citizens expect no less from the nation-state. For example, Ibrahim, a thirty-three-year-old liquor store owner from Istanbul, reported:

> This makes me proud, really... I mean you just go back to the past when you watch this. One’s heart beats faster, I mean beautiful. When I watch this I feel proud of my past, I mean, about my Ottoman past. My head is always high.

Similarly, talking about the laser light show at night, Ahmet, a thirty-three-year-old man from Ankara, said: "This is impressive. This conveys the feelings more [than the morning bit], the way one should feel the spirit of conquest and feel the enthusiasm." Cem (Istanbul, thirty-eight, construction worker) pointed to the importance of these events in keeping the "excitement alive," arguing:

> I like participating in things like that, things that are important for us. Even if it's [the conquest] something good for us, and bad for others, we have to remember it, we have to keep it alive. Even though we are stepping into the future we should not forget our past. I think these kinds of enthusiasms and exuberances infuse you with new excitement, which is necessary.

Spectacle Seekers highlight how emotions are necessary and expected in commemorative settings. According to Spectacle Seekers, even though we have almost entered the future, and even though the conquest has made some people upset, it should be celebrated to keep the excitement alive. Hyper-excitement in this environment is a good thing. As Ahmet observed, laser light shows depicting the conquest are preferred over the less eventful morning portion. This preference for marvel, sensation, and spectacle is also very much a reflection of the zeitgeist of late modernity. As people are bombarded by various kinds of imagined and unimagined pasts, they find it normal, and appreciate that the government makes an effort to provide displays of a similar sort. In Kemal's response below, characters such as Robin Hood and Gandalf come together with significant national events from the interwar period to convey his love of spectacle.

> When the movie Conquest came out though, oh my, let me tell you this, I waited for it impatiently. That movie took one and a half or maybe even two years in production. And I went to see it as soon as it was released. Just to support it! I mean the critiques were like, Fatih never had a love story like that. I mean why does it matter? People say Robin Hood did not exist either. Who cares? (Kemal, Kayseri, forty-four, college graduate, owner of an insurance company)

I asked him: “What do you think about the conquest commemorations?”

> I watch it on TV. If I have time, I go online and watch it here on my office computer, also. I also like August 30th and May 19th [important early Republican days in Turkish national history]. I love the official commemorations. I love these sorts of things... [I love] the Ottoman military marching band. I do not only like the military band though, I love these things [in general]. I love the scene when in *Lord of the Rings* Gandalf becomes white Gandalf, and how he looks on that mountain top at the dusk of the fifth day, and how the army follows him. I don’t know how many times I watched that scene; I just rewind it on repeat. I don’t know, I love this kind of show, maybe it’s my nature I don’t know, I like splendid and pompous things.

Kemal, a staunch AKP supporter who professes his deep love for Erdogan, a love akin to his love for his wife, underscored how his affinity for spectacle is not limited to AKP’s neo-Ottomanist spectacles. He also likes to celebrate August 30th, when Turkish soldiers “got rid of the last Greek soldier on Turkish soil,” and May 19th, when Mustafa Kemal started organizing the Turkish War of Independence back in 1919. Tolkien’s Gandalf becoming White Gandalf induces similar feelings in him. As Kemal’s account highlights, contrary to the assumption that populism leads people to act irrationally and give in to feelings, people are usually aware what gives them that emotional high and they intentionally seek it out. There is intentionality behind rewinding a scene again and again to expose oneself to the thrill of Gandalf becoming White Gandalf repeatedly. In other words, he is very reflexive about his love of spectacle. He is not just drawn to the spectacle like a zombie. He knows how to seek it out as an agent—both in popular culture and politics. It is not simply happening to him, induced by an outside force; rather, he seeks it and demands it from his leadership. (Alexander 2011; Altınordu 2017) Recognizing this aspect refutes the view that a populist spectacle in and of itself secures mass mobilization, or that the “mobilized” remain in a trance-state that hinders them from

cognitively engaging with what they are seeking and doing. For the Spectacle Seekers, populist rhetoric, perfectly fused with emotions and layered with historic binaries provided by nostalgia, is the desired mode.

This spectacular engagement with the world is reflected in the interviewee's expectations of political display as well. An interview with Ismail, a twenty-eight-year-old flight attendant from Istanbul, demonstrates how people expect national effervescence in commemorations, especially in crisis situations, when the nation feels low. As Turkey was undergoing a series of terrorist attacks in 2016 and 2017, Ismail thought the message that "nothing can hit Turkey" should be cultivated in commemorations.

> Me: What do you think about the commemoration of the conquest?
> Well they are packed. As a country we should get on the meydans [squares] and celebrate these important days, that's the way how it should be. It was a bit unfortunate timing as you know. There was a big incident, a blast, a terrorist attack or something. But the state celebrated the conquest in spite of that. Well that was necessary as it is an expression that you are strong, as in "nothing can hit us, nothing can bring us down" ...We have got to feel uplifted, we have to feel enthusiastic. We have to boost up!

As this excerpt shows, Ismail thinks the effervescent moments are necessary, especially in moments of national grief. Like Kemal, he is cognizant of the process of emotional inculcation, aware of the state's role in providing corporeal uplift, and recognizes it as one of the duties of state. Similarly, Osman, a thirty-year-old factory worker from Trabzon, sees providing emotional effervescence as a duty of the state and wishes that the commemorations took place in other cities too, and that Istanbul was not the only priority:

> Me: Have you had a chance to watch the commemoration on TV?

> Yes of course. We only have the chance to watch these things on TV. So beautiful. I wish these things took place in every city. Well, they did a wonderful job, I recommend they do this everywhere. This is wonderful. When they do something here they usually bring in the Military Marching band, and some performances, but nothing of this caliber.

Osman's call for celebrations in every city highlights this distinct, but increasingly common view of the state as the provider of marvel and merriment. It seems that in an age where spectacle is part of daily life, it becomes expected that the state provide this service.

Meryem, a forty-four-year-old tailor from Istanbul, recounted her experience at the commemorations, while also reflecting on the religious connotations of reviving the history of the conquest. Her account is a particularly good demonstration of how people simultaneously recount their enjoyment of the spectacle while reflecting on purpose in a self-aware way. She said: "We went to these celebrations three times. I mean it gives you goose bumps. I got so emotional when I first went. This commemoration emphasizes how powerful we are. Our president likes to keep the history alive right? I mean he likes to emphasize the past." Meryem then wondered whether this was because the conquest is about religion, and whether AKP exploits religion through the commemoration, so I asked if she thought there were any religious connotations here. She replied:

> I mean the past, mentioning Allah, I mean, look, even if they say "we are on this path" it is actually pretty religious. I mean I don't want to be disrespectful to our president but, he kind of makes everything sort of religious. I mean sometimes you even feel the need to say amen to what he says. Maybe it is better that way, as we live in a Muslim country, maybe it should be even more so. People should not forget about god.
> Me: So you like his religious style?
> I don't know, I am a bit undecided….

After, she emphasized again: “I really liked the commemoration. I love it. The one that we went was similar, they had put a stage above the sea, and horses were galloping as if from the sky. As if they were galloping to us, it was so loud, so wonderful, we were so impressed.” Her critical engagement with Erdogan’s religious rhetoric, whilst expressing her amazement at the commemoration, underlines that at any moment of populist political participation, there is awareness, both emotional and critical. As people are reflexive subjects, they also have the capability to ask, “Why am I feeling this way?” Getting goose bumps at a commemoration does not necessarily indicate being duped and getting carried away by a politician, but can also lead to a moment of questioning. Why do I get goose bumps? I am undecided.

As the interviews with Meryem and others demonstrate, when people are interviewed about their political participation they engage in reflexive interpretation of their behavior. Those who approve usually see and recognize the use of history in a spectacular format, and even expect the state to provide an emotional uplift in settings like this. So, they recognize the discursive, emotional, or ideological appeal of the Ottoman past, rather than following it without any critical engagement. The key is that the bombastic Ottoman nostalgia-fest is their preferred venue of social performance. In an age where you can watch “Gandalf become the White Gandalf on repeat,” and wait eagerly for the release of the conquest movie, you expect no less from your government. The nature of this critical engagement comes across even more with respondents who don’t seek this thrill themselves, but recognize “what it does for the wider population.”

Appraising Skeptics

Appraising skeptics are strong political analysts. They were eager to explain the mechanisms behind the rally and why it is needed in the contemporary world, even though they did not always agree with AKP's policies. They thought that the AKP did a good job of organizing the commemoration spectacle, while they were at times suspicious as to whether everyone went there with the "purest intentions." They saw the commemorations as a mechanism that made AKP's constituency stronger by reproducing the bond between Erdogan and his supporters. Similar to the Spectacle Seekers, they recognized that these commemorations were necessary in the age we live. They argued that, like popular TV shows depicting the Ottoman Empire, AKP showed their version of Ottoman history, which according to these informants may not necessarily have been objective. Some found the commemorations redundant, as Turkish society, according to them, is already emotionally connected to the Ottoman Empire. Appraising Skeptics feel that if AKP wants to invest in something, it should be in representing the Turkish past to the world.

In the following excerpt, Cemal, a sixty-six-year-old retired clerk from Istanbul, claims that AKP does a good job boosting the spirit of their constituency:

> Personally, I think these commemorations help boost the spirit, or reproduce the spirit of people who are already around him. [They do these ceremonies] to keep that spirit alive. Well, let me also say this, it is a wonderful thing for people in these circles. I mean, the man does his job greatly. Very solid. If you are not as solid as him, you got to question yourself. I find it quite solid.

Cemal, as a non-AKP voter, praises how AKP holds a rally and manages to reflect the attendance in the electoral results. For him, the success of Erdogan in holding a

commemoration rally sets the bar high for other politicians who cannot keep the spirit of their base alive.

Yunus, a twenty-two-year-old history major and an AKP voter from Istanbul, claimed that AKP does not have a real face, and, during the interview, acknowledged that the party uses symbols from the past very well.

> I mean this has to do with perception of history [in Turkey]. Since the perception of history here is in line with the clash of civilizations, crusaders and forces of Islam, the conquest of Constantinople becomes a very important topic. But there is a very classic thing here: If you don't have a real face, or if you never had one, you rely on symbols. I find this very understandable. Because he does not have real power. He has to find something: conquest. Well, he is going to say: Istanbul since 1453, which was Constantinople before. …Well these things, [these commemorations and Ottoman TV series] had their roots in society. AKP has condensed it, and people got to think: Yeah, we were thinking the same. So people's vision of history did not really change. AKP condensed and hyped it. The folks who watch and participate are conservative people anyways.

A sharp young man, Yunus pointed out how the Ottoman past was already a loaded signifier before AKP put their stamp on it. AKP, as a "faceless party," chose to put this Ottoman masque on and engraved their reading of conservatism on the Ottomans. Yunus also told me Ottomans did not have a problem with the Byzantine name of the city; it's us contemporaries with our own insecurities that inscribe the big rupture points, such as 1453, on the past, which was more continuous than we think. Later, during our three-hour interview, Yunus enthusiastically mentioned how much Erdogan profited from the historical DOMBRA song during his rallies. He signaled his lighthearted consumption of the song, as an AKP voter, and even made fun of it. I argue that this type of engagement with politics is also learned through larger consumption practices, especially related to popular culture. Like the notion of suspension of disbelief, or guilty

pleasures, once the audience wants to watch and enjoy a TV series, or a spectacle, they suspend their critical eye for a moment. They attend a rally, vote for a leader, and in other moments of daily life they make fun of their quirks, engage with their policies critically, and even tease themselves because they enjoyed the election song, and the rally.

I will let Meral, a forty-year-old adult educator, and author-on-the-side from Istanbul, explain how the "virtual age we live in" influences people's expectations of political rallies. After we watched the footage she claimed:

> Well, we are living in a virtual age. In order for people to sustain certain emotions these impressive shows are needed. It is similar to the logic of a TV series. I mean, at the end of the day history becomes a means to politics. People of course would enjoy participating in a thing like this... Yeah, it is also because we now have these phones, we are glued to our screens, we want to experience the world virtually. We don't understand things we read... But, if we see things like this, it awakens something, something called the Ottoman spirit. The thing we are talking about [as the Ottoman spirit], the thing we would not understand, however much we talked about it, all of a sudden becomes virtual, becomes something we can see, and it is very impressive. Well, this is fun, and beautiful. I mean successful virtually. I mean they do this well. I mean these things have a nice effect on people, they impress. With the beauty of the virtual material, like the Sezen Aksu [popular Turkish diva] songs in a movie, they give you a feeling. They are playing a play. Well this is the weapon of our age....

Here Meral identifies inducing feelings through popular culture as a weapon of our virtual age, and that it is expected that people would prefer spectacles instead of abstract notions. The "Ottoman Spirit" moves from being abstract to being real once AKP imbues it with feelings through mass spectacle.

Canan from Trabzon, after hearing the soundtrack to the state-produced TV series *Dirilis Ertugrul [Resurrection Ertugrul]* played during the commemorations, pointed out the equation of Erodgan with a character on the series, which tells the story of the

establishment of the Ottoman Empire. Canan's statement underscores the fluidity between TV characters and political figures.

> Well, Ertugrul gets equated with Erdogan sometimes. It appears as if Ertugrul was Erdogan. That is what I think. Sometimes Erdogan quotes him in his speeches. Is he giving a message subliminally? That's what I think he is doing sometimes. (Canan, forty-six, home-maker, female)

Then she continued to prescribe a better policy for commemorating the conquest. According to her, Turkish people are socialized enough to their Ottoman history and what needed to be done was an exportation of Ottoman history to other countries.

> Well if you actually want to do something meaningful, you can invest in lobbies outside of Turkey and represent Turkey. I don't need to get to know Turkey more. I already feel enthusiastic when you mention Suleiman the Magnificent or the conquest. For me what's important is influencing people outside of Turkey. Well, I mean, to sell your history. I mean they [other countries] can sell their history very well.... I mean pay a foreign actor, make really famous people act the most important parts. Well because, when our own actors and actresses act in these series only Arabs and Iranians pay attention, but the West does not. When would you attract the Westerners' attention? When Tom Cruise plays a part, when Tom Hanks pays a part. They get in every household that way.

Mediation plays a key role in the way that actors construct and transmit images, spectacles or representations of people—the reception is contingent. Audiences are not just voiceless masses waiting to be interpellated into popular subjects. They practice agency in regard to choosing to accept, reject, or modify claims made about them (Moffitt, 2016: 98, 105). In this context, Appraising Skeptics show a partial acceptance. Their sentiment is echoed in a greater sense by the respondents whom I call the History Guardians, who seemed to reject being "interpellated" through this spectacular moment altogether.

History Guardians

The History Guardians deem the use of history as a means to political ends to be a serious problem, and their view portrays how for a group of people the performance still remained de-fused. They found it repellent that history could be molded to be something beyond itself. Such sentiment signifies that for some nostalgia for a sacralized past actually hinders the re-fusion of the social performance. The History Guardians believe the "Ottoman past" is beyond AKP, and they think that, like religion, it should not be part of politics. It paradoxically shows that the history work that AKP has inherited from previous political regimes has actually been successful because the Ottoman past is now effectively sacralized. Yet, where the embracement of this Ottoman past is at its peak, nostalgia moves beyond AKP, which at the end of the day is a mundane political party. As the Ottoman past is seen as a sacral power, a segment, best displayed by the History Guardians cluster, finds AKP's use of it questionable and exploitative. The staunchest critics, History Guardians are people who recognize the emotional power of the Ottoman past the most, but are against AKP's monopolization of it. They reject the emotional engineering project that AKP is leading, and the use of it "for populist" purposes.

History Guardians claim that these commemorations foster a dual understanding of history and polarize the country into two camps. Most respondents in this group embraced the Ottoman past, and claimed that they would have attended the commemorations if they found them to be objective representations of history. Echoing critiques of populism, they think that the rallies exploit people's sacred emotions as an investment for elections. The ritualistic nature and overuse of the Ottoman in daily life

invoked a feeling of oversaturation. Most interestingly, some also shared feelings of fear of being duped by "demagogy." The biggest and most elaborate backlash to the commemorations came from the followers of National Outlook, the ideological view of the Saadet Party, the heir of the (now banned) Refah Party. As RP was the first party to revive the Conquest of Constantinople, these people see the AKP's take on this historical event as inauthentic. They questioned AKP's claim of being the true heirs of Mehmed the Conqueror, "as AKP carries out the West's imperial aims further, rather than standing against it."

Mehmetcan, a sixty-year-old retired executive chauffeur from Ankara, underlining his love of the Ottoman and disdain for using it for political ends stated:

> I mean if you gave this to me as a mere conquest show I would have watched and attended it. But, if they are going to give political speeches before and after, I would leave. I hate this stuff…. Yet, I would watch this commemoration, even if they showed it for ten hours. I would watch it for ten hours. Because I sincerely yearn for that past.

Mehmetcan's account underlines a nostalgic yearning for the "true" Ottoman past, disdaining the interjection of politics before and after. This view echoes the secularist critique against the use of religion in the name of politics, which is deeply rooted in Turkish society, further illustrating the sacral state Ottoman history has reached in contemporary Turkey. Similar to the way in which secular Turks historically claimed religion is sacred, and thus outside of politics, history has also gained a religion-like power for Mehmetcan.

After watching the video together, Ceyhun, a staunchly secular thirty-year-old man with a small business from Izmir similarly said:

> This is not a visual that attracts me. Well, I guess because there is such a polarization going on in Turkey, these things create even an antipathy, rather than sympathy. These things reached a certain saturation, they are rubbing it [commemoration/conquest] in our faces, and this repels me. I don't want to get repelled but they are pushing me to, so I become more distant. They are forcing me to something I don't want to... If objective people organized these things I would be really interested, maybe even go. At the end of the day [the Ottoman Empire] is our roots. Our whole family, our ancestors lived in that era, a part of us belongs there, but they still manage to repel. They are hindering us from living or memorializing our past the way we want. Because when these things become a part of politics, they get molded into something else, they become a source of antipathy for certain groups of people. That is how people get polarized.

As history is sacralized successfully, and recognized as the roots, using it to further political ends, to the extent that people become polarized, becomes questionable and repellent. Nergis, a thirty-seven-year-old homemaker from Istanbul, similarly uttered her uneasiness with the commemoration in the wake of the 2017 referendum. She shared the divide between her and her husband:

> I mean the way we celebrate our national holidays; it is natural that we celebrate the Conquest of Constantinople. But, I think there is a lot of duality in Turkish politics. Because of that, I am anxious, uneasy. I am not at peace.
> Me: What do you mean by duality?
> There is no more mutual respect between people. I mean, left is fanatically left, right is fanatically right. Nobody respects each other, including me and my partner.
> Me: So your husband does not respect others' political opinions?
> I make him really angry about the referendum. He is going to vote YES [to the new constitution] because he is a staunch AKP follower. Well, I respect that is his choice. I am more in the middle, myself. One part of me says yes, one part of me says no. Even as husband and wife people don't respect each other anymore. Or to put it in a better way, people don't tolerate each other anymore. I am honestly very upset that our country has become this way.

As Ceyhun, Nergis, and Mehmetcan articulate, the commemoration rally has the power to further polarize people, and people are becoming wary of living in a divided country. The following accounts point to "manipulation of emotions in creating this

divide" at the rallies. After watching the conquest video Ayse, a forty-five-year-old unemployed-turned-homemaker from Istanbul, says:

> They are playing with people's emotions. People do go there with their spiritual feelings in the foreground. Less of them go with the appeal of Tayyip. And Tayyip uses this. [Erdogan thinks] If I use something like this, I will go in their good books, I will gain the public's approval.
> Me: What kind of spiritual feelings do they go there with?
> The conquest is an Islamic notion, it makes the religious feelings rise up, blood rises. The person goes there with those feelings, but he [Erdogan] only sees it as political. Do you get it? I mean there is something else going on there. I sometimes talk to people [who attend]. They say it's beautiful, it's a conquest commemoration, it is a banquet, and it is a feast. They say this naively, with all of their good intentions. But the person who is behind it, the people who organize that, their intentions are so different. Well people go to those things with very innocent feelings. Some of them maybe are fans, maybe they side with the political power, but I think most of them go there with different kind of feelings.

Ayse reminds us of the intersectional nature of religion, history, and politics. People might attend a commemoration rally because they already approach the commemoration from a religious viewpoint, and they are already emotionally primed for this religiously important event. But, once at the rally, these feelings get enhanced and melded with political meaning. Ayse is against the emotional engineering and exploitation of history.

Mert, a twenty-three-year-old young man from Istanbul, similarly argues, "both seculars and conservatives hold emotions about the conquest… but they [the leadership] try to use these emotions for their own ends":

> Well, they did this right before the elections. This seems a bit ideological to me. I mean they are not commemorating the conquest because they want to protect the memory of it, but for their own self-interest. Well, as I said there is a lack of authenticity and sincerity here. This group of people who attends seems to be representing a particular community, belongs to one person. What I mean is that this crowd does not represent Turkey to me. This organization does not represent Turkey.

> Me: So you mean this spirit of conquest does not represent the whole of Turkey? I mean when you think about it, let's look at the two sides of this... Both sides, both the seculars and the conservatives hold emotions about the conquest, they both have a spirit of conquest. But they try to make manipulate these emotions for their own ends. This is a problem with the leadership.

As Mert explains, both the seculars and the conservatives have an emotional attachment to the conquest of Constantinople. They are successfully socialized and mobilized into it, but throwing a conquest rally right before the elections, for him, means manipulation of this spirit, and he is not convinced of the authenticity of this performance.

Erkan, a thirty-seven-year-old National Outlook follower from Kayseri with his own cleaning business offered his memory of and participation in the commemoration of the conquest led by Erbakan, while also explaining how the National Outlook had an anti-imperialist vision of the Ottoman Empire that was unlike the AKP.

> Actually, the national outlook, the political ideology I follow, we also embrace the Ottoman Empire. In that sense, we are not very different from them [National Outlook from AKP]. But there is a difference between us and them in terms of discourse and content. We are less republican and more Ottomanist, and less secular and more Islamist. But they—this is their problem—they are not against imperialism and exploitation. They are not against America's big Middle Eastern project, or what Israel does in the Middle East. They are not authentic/ genuine in this sense. They look like they are against these things and they pretend they are against these things and influence the public in a way which benefits them. But they actually do the opposite of what they say both in politics, in economy, and investments. But they convince people. Their neo-Ottomanism is just cosmetic. In reality, they don't have that vision. (Erkan, 37, Kayseri)

The people with the most emotional investment in the Ottoman past questioned the rhetoric of representing the oppressed people the most. Erkan shared his emotions as a teenager back in 1994 and shunned AKP's use of them for exploitation and profiting:

> Well, I was so excited back then. It was so beautiful. We thought Erbakan Hodja [leader of Refah Party] was going to arrive from one of the doors but he instead landed on the stadium with his helicopter, that old boy. He laughs: Well you never knew where the Hodja would appear from. Oh my god, it was so exciting…. To sum up, these contemporary commemorations are just boloney, bogus. We [the National Outlook] still commemorate the conquest, we have the most exuberant one still. But, they don't provide any place for us in Istanbul. We do it in Adapazari. They try to blow our exuberant flame out. Because that is one of our traditions, the commemoration of conquest. Theirs is fake, and as much as it may be beautiful, it is still an imitation, and not the original. They commemorate the conquest to exploit and profit.

Erkan, who personally experienced RP's early commemoration as a young Islamist, reminisced of his excitement, but criticized AKP's version of it, labeling it fake. He still sought its collective effervescence, but preferred RP's authentic, anti-imperial, and non-exploitative version of it. His account once again reminds us how the Turkish political experience is not about a strict divide between the emotional and the critical/rational in the face of populism, but rather an articulation of attachments and ways of processing what is going on in the world through both emotions and cognition. He is emotionally attached to RP's version of the Ottoman past, and his critical engagement with AKP's use of this past distances him further from them.

The successful performance of representation is key to political success. Yet, the signifier of this is not only electoral success, but, also that the message resonates with audiences beyond the given constituency (Moffitt, 2016: 107). In other words, the audience, whether they think they belong to this represented audience or not, should believe that the populist represents the "people." They also need to be convinced that the performance is authentic. The Spectacle Seekers show that AKP convinces its constituency successfully, and the Appraising Skeptics make visible that the audience is

convinced AKP represents "the people," but History Guardians are not convinced at all by this social performance, and deem it as inauthentic and false. This last group articulates the failure of social performance, the moment when the audience find the message not genuine and the actors inauthentic, acting not from sincere motives but with the intentions to manipulate (Alexander 2011; Altınordu 2017).

Populist nostalgia as an ideal-type

"What do populist mobilization projects look like in their practical details and how are the dynamics of populist mobilizing different from or similar to those of other modes of political activity?" (Jansen 2011:91). One answer is that they increasingly rely on Spectacular Nostalgia and its core sensibilities. In Spectacular Nostalgia states no longer fear emotions, like in the Romantic and Medical forms, but harness them as a form of productive power. States try to monopolize, organize, actively manage, and manufacture emotions in mass settings. The temporal character of desire in this form points to a fusion of past and present, where the nation-state draws on past symbols to construct a proud expansive present/future. This type of nostalgia—which I differentiate from other forms—is very much about passionate action, conquest of new hearts and realms, and following the leadership of a "fearless man," a doer. It is a mobilizing emotional force rather than a lethargic lingering in the past. Neither Erdogan, nor Donald Trump[16], is

[16] Hell and Steinmetz (2017) point to the rise of right-wing populist movement grounded in ethnic nationalism and Christian Islamophobia, and Gorski (2017) identifies the elements of conquest, apocalypse, ethno-religious boundary making and Golden Age nostalgia in what he calls religious nationalism as part of this movement. This indicated that these populist nostalgic movements share common tropes. Binary structures are present in these cases, content that goes under each binary changes.

invoking the past for the purposes of extended meditation and reminiscence. Their nostalgia is very much about doing and accomplishing in the present and future (Berezin 2017). Hence, their rhetoric is very much about building roads, bridges, and new infrastructure and conquering by drilling, mining, and carving, “just like” ancestors and predecessors in the glorious past. Erdogan, like Mehmed the Conqueror, has managed to bring the city, bridges, and roads to people. Trump has promised to fix crumbling infrastructure and make America “great again.” Bringing back the past requires certain stamina, a conquering mindset that they don’t shy away from. Populism, very well defined by Jansen as a practice of political mobilization, shares this moving and mobilizing aspect with nostalgia. It is this affinity that allows them to travel so well together (Karakaya 2018).

Moreover, the nostalgia observed here is a particular form of collective memory that relies on binaries as well, where the past is posited as infinitely better than the contemporary era, a past which the fierce leader is going to bring back. In turn, nostalgia connects to populist rhetoric well and tightens the binaries that populist rhetoric relies upon, providing the combination of emotional glue and centuries long history. As I have shown in my analysis, this gluing motional amalgam is a shield of pride and honor against the envy of enemies, past shame, or fear of failure. It is also a release from the “feeling rules,” which dictate caring about others, or “political correctness” (Hochschild 2016). The contemporary form, exemplified by Modi’s Hindutva, or Brexit’s "take back control" operates on this binary vision, cemented with emotions. Every political project relies on a past anchor, which can take many forms: a trauma narrative (2004), a cosmopolitan story portraying different groups living in harmony (Iğsız 2018), a cult of

emperor. But, the nostalgia observed in contemporary populist projects relies on a dual and divided history: a glorified past vs. crumbling present, a present which the leader or party in question is supposedly going to save the people from. The duality also leaves room for interpretation, an uncertainty of the nature of the glorious past that needs to be unpacked in different contexts. Which past was better according to Brexit supporters? The British Empire the sun never set on, or the Westminster democracy? Similarly, which America "was great"? The Progressive Era, or the 50s? This vagueness has the potential to draw in more people as they can fit their perfect past into this dual frame, again based on their standpoint (Karakaya 2018). As Isaac Ariail Reed argues, in some cases the power of meaning to move the social world results from the unpredictable ways in which it can be elaborated, and from its inherent ambiguities (Reed 2013:200).

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the stigmatized duo of populism and nostalgia by analyzing the commemoration of the Conquest of Constantinople rallies in Istanbul. I established this as an ideal-type that needs to be separated from other forms of nostalgia(s). Through ethnographic discourse analysis, I conveyed the techniques to create collective effervescence in populist rallies, which revolve around the relation between a strong, messianic leader and the audience. I showed that the contemporary populism relies on a distinct form of political performance, with Spectacular Nostalgia at the center. The rally exemplified that Ottoman nostalgia proves a central resource in creating the binary oppositions on which populism so heavily relies by claiming a continuous and compelling past, which promises to guide contemporary Turkey into its glorious future.

The populist nostalgic rally has "perfected" the mechanisms of mobilization through a specific kind of social performance, which creates a seamless authenticity. Hence, we increasingly see a similar pattern around the world, a proven recipe, open to fusion with the local nostalgias to gain political traction, especially because nostalgia boosts the authenticity claim, which is the end goal of a social performance. Nostalgia is inherently about an emotional relationship with a represented past; a mobilizing desire is central to nostalgia, and this desire has increasingly been shaped and massified by a constant plunder of signifiers of authenticity, anchored in the past. Moreover, because nostalgia is always already imbued with emotions, it helps build a moving "system of collective representation," one of the key elements of a successful social performance, ultimately re-fusing the six elements in the social performance. With the help of this nostalgic script, the main actor—the heir to a historical epoch—boosts their claim to being seamless, true, and ultimately authentic. Yet, in the Turkish case, "too much nostalgia" also seems to leverage de-fusion, by making a segment of the audience question the actor's monopoly on a sacred past and hence their "realness" (Karakaya 2018).

This form of nostalgia is a specific form of collective memory practice that builds—rooted in binaries—an emotional relationship with a glorified, yet lost past. This past highlights the political path to a successful national future, by providing a binary roadmap of winners and losers, friends and foes and the sacred and the profane. Central to nostalgia is desire, which has been increasingly shaped by a constant allusion to an authenticity anchored in the past. Shown through the Turkish case, populist discourse might have an "elective affinity" (Löwy 2004; Weber 2005) to nostalgia because it

anchors “the people” in an imagined past while leading them to desire an equally radiant future, by creating a powerful temporally expansive “we”. Thus, this nostalgia is built on the binary of a crumbling today and a glorious future. The binaries inherent in both spectacular nostalgia and populism bind very well together, with the help of emotions mobilized during the rallies. The binary structures such as us vs. them, past vs. future, and enemies vs. friends get enhanced with emotions such as determination, persistence and vigilance. In other words, emotions act as glue to tighten the nostalgic and populist binaries. The elective affinity between nostalgia and populism works especially well in the Turkish case, by creating and relying on a discourse of dual and divided histories that that furthers the constructed rift between the “people” and the “elite”. While the Republican elite took the “real history” away from the people, the AKP “gives it back.”

CHAPTER 5

The Panorama of Emotions

Entering Istanbul's Panorama Museum of Conquest, visitors find themselves in the middle of the siege of Constantinople, right before the city fell. With the sounds of exploding cannonballs, loud marching music, and neighing horses, they experience the conquest in a giant snow globe, as Mehmed the Conqueror's silhouette, disguised in the clouds, shines upon them permanently. Commemorating the siege and fall of Constantinople in 1453, the highly popular museum is run by Culture.co, the artistic branch of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. For years, the ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP (hereafter AKP) operated the municipality and Culture.co, making the Panorama Museum a fruitful ground to observe both the public discourse and personal performance of Ottoman nostalgia in Turkey. The museum, with its dramatic interactive exhibit, is a destination for both domestic and international tourists. Between 2009 and 2015 almost five million people visited it, which is widely advertised in billboards around highways and bus stops, with the interpellation: "Have you visited the Panorama Museum of Conquest yet?" Bussed tours facilitate attendance for Istanbul's communities from varying neighborhoods, and domestic tourists from all around Turkey frequent the museum, especially during the holidays.

I study the Museum of Conquest in order to understand how a national emotional attachment is sustained, articulated and re-negotiated through neo-Ottomanism. Socialization into nationhood involves deep emotional learning, and everyday life

reproduction (Anderson 1991; Berezin 1991, 1994, 1997; Billig 1995; Herzfeld 2005; Smith 1998, 2003, 2013; Zubrzycki 2012). One of the key ways in which this socialization occurs is through an attachment via national history: as Zubrzycki argues, "individuals experience historical narratives and national myths through their visual depictions and material embodiments, as well as in the built environment like architecture, monuments, and the landscape" (2017:5). As social actors viscerally experience national narratives and myths, otherwise distant and abstract discourses become concretized. This process, generating sentiments of national belonging and emotional attachments, makes the distant imagined community become personal (ibid.). Museums are one of the primary sites where these national identities are performed, and where cultural symbols are invented, reinvented and reproduced (Autry 2013; Carbonell 2004). In line with this, Teeger and Vinitzky-Seroussi suggest that museums are like stages, which allow individuals to choose from available scripts, props and characters (Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger 2009). Based on their own choosing, museum-goers are then able to negotiate their beliefs and attitudes about the past while constructing their identities (Teeger and Vinitzky-Seroussi 2007). Via enhanced visual and sound effects, contemporary interactive museums foster the emotional attachment to the nation to a higher degree than their old counterparts.

Nationalism is embodied through an emotional process, yet this attachment to the nation is not a one-time, complete event, but has to be constantly renewed. The effervescence, or free-flowing intense feelings, needs to be successfully organized into the "right" kind of emotions. But free flowing feelings—be they a result of a museum going, a pilgrimage, a rally, or encounter between bodies—are not necessarily productive

from a governmental perspective. These feelings become "useful" to the nation-state when they are harnessed, organized and labeled the "right way" in a process of *cognitive meaning-making*. This process of meaning-making from raw feelings to meaningful national emotions is the core of my investigation.

We would think that a state-led museum would be a textbook vehicle of nationalism, but is the Museum of Conquest one such factory of AKP culture industry where feelings turn into the right kind of emotions, in assembly line fashion? As I will show, I found significant variety in emotional meaning-making in reaction to the same interface. To unpack this variation I use the dual-process model of cognition, particularly the differentiation between declarative and nondeclarative personal and public cultures, to delve into the process of emotional meaning-making (Lizardo 2017; Vaisey 2009). I complicate the link between affective experience at the museum and national emotions, showing how core-sensibilities of state-led neo-Ottomanism get produced in an intimately national interactive museum setting.

My findings suggest that for some the feeling state in the museum maps onto a clear emotion: I feel *great*; we are *glorious*; I am *proud* of my past. At times, this coupling is so seamless, people think everybody must be feeling the same, a strong example of Andersonian imagined community: "Everybody is feeling the way I do, of course?" Yet, for others, the road from feelings experienced at the museum to emotions is more complicated. Interacting with the museum, people express a disappointment about the discrepancy between the glorious past and the present Turkey. This suggests that they come to the museum with discontent about the current state of the country and have a difficulty consolidating their everyday dissatisfaction with the felt state in the museum. In

other words, at a more visceral level, the museum makes them "feel great," but they have a hard time attaching that state to an everyday sentiment of how things are in contemporary Turkey, which then translates as disappointment. In the last iteration, people have a hunch as to how other visitors might be feeling, and worry about a case of a strong emotional attachment to an imagined community, an imagined community potentially different than their contemporary imagined community. Overall, these different routes complicate the model of emotional national attachment, by providing a nuanced account of what occurs in a venue that is supposed to reproduce national sentiments.

In this chapter, I first describe the context of *Panorama*, focusing on its location in the historic peninsula of Istanbul, and its significance as an example of AKP's emotional governance. Narrating people's immediate reactions, I then move to show how the museum elicits powerful responses with the help of historic stimuli. Focusing on visible facial expressions, and bodily movements helps me describe the embodied level of engagement with history. During interactions and on-the-spot interviews, a significant group of visitors emphasized how they would not be able to explain how the museum affects them, specifically in that they are *moved beyond words*. The non-verbalizable personal culture also came through when people told me that I should not interview Turks, as everybody would just feel the same; that "it is just the way things are". I argue that this inexplicable and elusive way of being at the museum is where the power of the affective register lies, a power which in most cases has been fostered by multiple visits to the museum. After this, I move to the discursive level with my informants, where, cued by the museum, they engage with many layers of living in 21st century Istanbul. First,

they acknowledge the suffering of the people of the past, and the need to be worthy of these long-gone people's sacrifice which have made their own Istanbul lives possible. Second, they mourn Istanbul and its long-gone prosperity and glory and try to make sense of a Turkey ridden with ethnic conflict. This dissonance makes them ask: Why can't we be as glorious as we were back then? Third, I move to unpack a general skepticism about the appropriate subjects of my study. These concerns might be paraphrased like this: If others are feeling the way I am feeling, yet are linking these feelings to the wrong emotions by alluding to a different kind of ideology it is concerning, and "I am alarmed." Here, I also recount the bafflement of some of my informants at being chosen as my subject of inquiry, as according to them, everybody should feel similarly at this environment as a Turkish citizen.

The Context and Location

Panorama 1453 is a public manifestation of political Ottoman nostalgia—neo-Ottomanism. In this neo-Ottoman context, the Conquest of Constantinople on May 29th, 1453, under the command of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, has become the key event commemorated in populist mass rituals (Karakaya 2018). The museum is located in *Topkapı Kültür Park*, a major site which showcases many interrelated aspects of the AKP's political machine, from urban transformation to massive spatial re-imagination. This "park of culture," right next to the Byzantine ruins, is the culmination of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's relocation of the intercity bus hub to Esenler in 1994 and the "rehabilitation" of the area from the "filth and hustle" previously associated with the now-glossy spectacle. Opened to the public in 2009, the park is a central symbol of the

transformation of the bigger district of Fatih[17], an important AKP development project. The Fatih district is loaded with historical connotations already embedded in a sacred aura, and therefore is an ideal site for this complex. The district represents the Ottoman legacy with numerous historic sites, shrines, mosques, and palaces, and the *Museum of Conquest* itself is located right next to the shrine and mosque of Merkez Efendi[18]—one of the most visited urban pilgrimage sites in Istanbul, as well as a Dervish Lodge and an old cemetery. Indeed, stepping into the museum is a collective activity. On the busiest days, one is often elbow-to-elbow with fellow visitors. During Ramadan, groups from other cities include the museum in their mosque visits; similarly, during important national commemorations, such as the Children's Day, corresponding groups flock in.

At the museum, a mannequin of Mehmed the Conqueror greets the visitors in the entrance hall and leads to the permanent exhibit. After rushing through the permanent exhibit's panels of detailed historical information, the visitors pass up a dark staircase, emerging into the blue-domed space of the panorama. The circular structure of the dome depicts the siege and the conquest of Istanbul, allowing the viewer to imagine what it would have been like to stand in Istanbul circa 1453. An Ottoman janissary in full period costume is always present to take pictures with the visitors. The audio guide, which includes a directional GPS, is eerily interactive with one's movements. When a visitor turns their head, for example, the prompt might say, "Now you are looking at Mehmed the conqueror. The soldiers you see on his left were always left-handed (solak) so they

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[17.] Fatih is the Arabic word for conqueror and the title given to Mehmed 2nd after he conquered Constantinople.
[18] Merkez Efendi was a 16th century Sufi.

could shoot in that direction to protect him without blocking him in." The audio guide is mostly about warfare and war tactics, focusing on the progress of Mehmed's glorious victories. "Now you are looking at the city walls. At the bottom you can see soldiers digging tunnels to reach the wall from down to blow it. In the distance you can see Hagia Sophia." Those without the audio guide are treated to constant loud Mehter marching band music, "Allahu Akbars," the sounds of cannon balls exploding, and neighing horses.

The exhibit allows a small-scale circumambulation, and when a visitor enters the space they usually go around the panorama once or more. A phone camera almost always accompanies this circular visit, with observers either filming the entire experience or taking selfies. In this depiction, the museumgoer is in the middle of the war, watching the scene from the perspective of the Ottoman soldiers, as it is frozen at a moment of attack. The Ottoman side is more identifiable, their faces very elaborately detailed, the Byzantine soldiers less so since they are in distance. I heard many informants commenting that this was their second, fourth or fifth time at the museum. There are hidden gems to be searched for, like the disguised silhouette of Mehmed the Conqueror (Fatih) in the cloudy dome, which people call Fatih's miracle.

Panorama[19] 1453 is a peculiar contemporary hybrid of a nostalgic device dating back to the late 18th century with state-of-the-art augmented reality technologies. It is touted as the best panorama in the world, as traditionally panoramas do not have domes, and are not nearly as big. In an interview, the museum director told me how the

[19] Panorama is a neologism for the 18th century medium consistent of a specially designed rotunda and the circular painting it housed. Invented by Robert Berker, the device entails an exhibition space in which a massive picture completely surrounds the spectators (Oleksijczuk 2011).

Panorama administrators around the world question theirs after seeing the one in Istanbul, he also added how they applied for a Guinness Record certification—even though the application proved futile. As an expert on Panoramas, he reminded me how Istanbul has a historic claim to this form, "as we have one of the very first Panoramas, the fourteenth-century Galata Tower in Karaköy". The best proof of the Museum of Conquest Panorama's magnificent illusory powers in my own opinion was the real bird which kept crashing into the tree illustration during the construction. The curator allegedly said, "We convinced the birds, now it's time to convince the visitors."

Culture, cognition and emotion

Recent scholarship on culture and cognition (Cerulo 2010, 2015, 2018; Lizardo 2017; Lizardo et al. 2019; Lizardo and Strand 2010; Winchester 2016) proves key to interpret the interaction with the museum, in an ethnographic setting where people come in contact with the nation through collective memory practices. Here I integrate this scholarship on cognition with Illouz's (1997) argument that feelings become emotions when people attach meanings to them, and ultimately argue that national emotions emerge through a cognitive meaning-making process. As Winchester (2016) suggests, the "nation"—cognitively abstract yet deeply felt—is an area where culture and cognition interact to produce particular patterns of actions and subjectivities (2016, 603). Looking at the process of emotional meaning-making at a museum context helps flesh out both the cognitively abstract nation and deep feelings, while providing a mechanism that links the two to make "national emotions."

One of the key contributions of cultural cognition literature is the dual-process model, which differentiates between deeply ingrained schemas and deliberation (Vaisey 2009, 1687). Vaisey illustrates the interaction between culture and cognition through the metaphor of riding an elephant. Where deeply ingrained schemas, such as practical consciousness and habitus, make the elephant, deliberation – that is, agency – resides in the rider, whose sphere of decision-making is shaped by their current life situation and context. Drawing from D'Andrade (1995), Vaisey argues that the values and beliefs of a culture may be internalized through the cultural shaping of emotions, which "gives certain cultural representations emotional *force*, in that individuals experience the truth and rightness of certain ideas as emotions *within* themselves" (D'Andrade 1995, 229; emphasis in original in Vaisey 2009, 1685). While the insights from the dual-process model are usually used to theorize how culture might be implicated in both motivation and justification, this model also helps us understand first how feelings elicited by visiting a national museum become *national emotions*, and second, how this process is complicated and contested through an iterative process between the so-called rider and the elephant.

Expanding on the dual-process model, Lizardo (2017) differentiates between *declarative* and *nondeclarative* personal culture. *Declarative* culture refers to personal culture that is put to use in a deliberate and linear fashion for tasks like judgment, categorization and reasoning. Another form of personal culture, the *nondeclarative* is acquired in the form of "implicit, durable, cognitive-emotive associations, bodily comportments, and perceptual and motor skills built from repeated long-term exposure to consistent patterns and experience" (2017, 92). Lizardo highlights how these two forms

of personal culture interact with *public culture,* "externalized in the form of public symbols, discourses and institutions" (2017, 93). In my case, the immediate *public* cultural interface is the museum, a space of state-led history telling. Within this public space individual come to process *national emotions* in an interaction between *declarative* (rider) and *nondeclarative* (elephant) personal culture.

Lizardo (ibid.) argues that cultural sociology lacks a convincing theorization of the relationship between *declarative* and *nondeclarative* personal culture. There is an unwarranted presumption that *nondeclarative* culture is involuntary, "hot" or "emotive" cognition, he argues, whereas the *declarative* culture is "cold" and "voluntary". The perceived dissociation between *nondeclarative* and *declarative* culture, what Lizardo calls "weak coupling," emerges not because of a conflict between cognitive and emotive systems, but because of "dual enculturation pathways." This implies that the two levels are dissociable, people "can display declarative abilities about public culture that they don't know how to use," or may possess cultural skills that they are not able to articulate. This non-verbalizable culture can be read as "the way things are" – the "common sense" of Gramsci (further developed in different ways by Geertz, Stuart Hall, and Swidler, for example), or the "doxa" of Bourdieu (Lizardo 2017, 100). Winchester theorizes the integration of the two types of cognition through the "embodied metaphor," which helps "constitute schematic associations between practical perception and discursive conceptualization" (2016:590). Similarly, Winchester and Green (2019) argue for an iterative process between the rider and the elephant in sustaining motivation in "becoming" processes such as converting to a religion, or training to be a Mixed Martial

Arts fighter. So how, I ask in this chapter, might the dual process model work within Panorama 1453's space of national enculturation?

Social situations dictate different feeling rules, creating cognitive limits around what can legitimately be felt (Hochschild 1979). In other words, emotions are "related to cognitions and involve a sense of 'how to act, how to play the game that is never altogether conscious or purely reducible to rules'" (Burkitt 2002; Calhoun 2001; Illouz, Gilon, and Shachak 2014) But how does the relation between emotion and cognition *work*? What is the *process* that results in a person articulating, for example, pride? Here I demonstrate how incorporating Lizardo's modified dual process model helps to answer this question. The museum tends to induce similar bodily sensations[20], or feelings, especially in Turkish nationals, but it is the subjects themselves who form the emotions, each drawing on the cognitive scaffolding they bring to the process. This is sociologically exciting, because the most recent neuroscientific findings confirm that subjects cognitively "make emotions" by processing information from both outside and within the body (Barrett 2009). It is time that we talk about emotions as part of cognition, and how articulated emotions are part of *declarative* personal culture.

It takes a cognitive process for people to organize "hot" feelings into declarable emotions such as pride, honor or resentment. I therefore agree with Lizardo that there is no tug of war between cognition and emotions, rather, there is an additional process involved to move from feelings to emotions. In other words, people articulate complex

[20] Of course, these sensations will be personal, dictated by the subject's historically situated subjectivity.

emotions after an interpretive process, based on the cues they are getting both from the outside environment, and from bodily sensations.

Below I show that when the *declarative* and *nondeclarative* responses to the Panorama museum experience seamlessly match, with people following the highly schematized cues, visitors understand their emotions as pride and gratitude. But sometimes the felt state does not result in a clear cut emotion. For example, sometimes visitors are concerned about others taking the wrong emotional path, which I summarize as follows: 'I have hot feelings, and I could emote X way or Y way, and because I know better, I take the X path, but what if others take the Y path'?

Table 2: Feelings to Emotions		
[Nondeclarative] Feelings	Cognitive Process Strong or Weak Coupling	[Declarative] Emotions

The Inexplicable/ Elusiveness of Emotions

The most basic level of interaction with the Panorama is visible to the keen observer. People smile, tear up, show astonishment, poke each other and gaze in contemplation. When overwhelmed they cry. With its loud war music, exploding cannon balls, and immersive snow-globe structure, the museum makes one feel this way at the *nondeclarative* level. At this stage the experience is pretty open ended, yet meanings emerge when people attribute these feelings to concrete emotions in a *declarative* way.

The following are excerpts of my observations without any prompts. The most striking expression that I observed is "*Ah*[21]."

> Today, I stood right at the entrance to the dome, to capture the very first reaction of the visitors. A group of middle aged women in headscarves stepped in with a facial expression of awe, and a smile mixed with curiosity and disbelief, and a happy astonishment. These expressions were coupled with the performance of asking questions to each other, poking, and holding selfie sticks. Next, I overheard a woman and her husband. She was pointing to the cannons, with a restrained smile and holding her husband's arm while her husband explained her how Fatih used sledges to carry his fleet.
>
> A woman pointed to the picture and the city walls on the picture and assuredly told her astonished friends: "The same city walls are outside the museum. I will show you when we get out, the Byzantine built them and this picture shows how Fatih conquered Istanbul." It was almost as if she wanted to say something grounding to bring them to the present. Another visitor pointed to the sky dome and whispered: Oh my god, how did they build this? I overheard somebody almost painfully ponder: *Ah*, how beautifully they built this museum, *Ah*, is this how they conquered Istanbul.

How did they build this? This mode of questioning moved beyond the museum and manifested in awe at the conquest. How did they conquer? I became most aware of the effect of the museum when I encountered people crying. In the following excerpt, Cemal tells me how the long explanatory panels and posters do not do anything for him because he cannot read, but the exploding cannonballs make the reading redundant anyways.

> At the exit of the panoramic picture, by the permanent exhibit I saw an old man in his seventies looking at the posters and crying. I am going to call him Uncle Cemal. I approached him and asked: "How did you find the exhibit?" He was clearly shaken, wiping his tears, he said "I am really moved and became really emotional up there". When I asked him which part he liked the most, he replied: I loved the picture upstairs (meaning the panoramic exhibit). He added:

[21] "*Ah*" is an expression of pain, yearning, surprise, based on the tone it denotes love, affection, pain.

> "Daughter[22], I am illiterate, these scripts here don't mean much to me, but upstairs, with the sounds of cannonballs I became so excited, so moved". He could not really talk much because he was crying, and I did not want to interfere with his personal space any more. He kept wiping his tears and weeping as he was moving around the exhibit.

I described my encounter with the crying Cemal to the lead curator, a pioneer in early Turkish cartoons, and now a panoramic museum expert in the midst of producing two more Panorama museums in Turkey. He said: "I have come across these people too, and I asked them why they are crying, but could not get an accurate answer". He continued:

> Of course, I have my guesses. First of all, although you enter to a place that is thirty-eight meters in circumference, it feels like it is bigger, feels like the images in the distance are kilometers away. People get struck, but this is not because this place is telling our history or anything, this expansion of space hits one. People become perplexed and confused. So, technically as a rule of physics when you walk, objects that are far and big should appear to be walking with you. Something near is going to disappear, yet a big object is supposed to walk with you. At the museum, the clouds should be technically walking with you, yet they don't. The brain can't comprehend this: the brain goes, wait this was a three dimensional space, the cloud should be coming with me, yet it does not. People get confused by this, they cry. They think there is something they can't explain about this space. Not really, what we do here can be explained scientifically.

The curator's explanation brings to mind the adage that "there is no cognition without feeling and no meaning without emotion" (Johnston and Klandermans 1995). Feelings become emotions when they are imbued with meaning (Illouz 1997). It is the subject who develops, bodily sensations and effervescence into fully fleshed emotions by attaching meanings to them, tying the *non-declarative* and *declarative*, drawing from personal experience in *public culture*. As the curator explained to me, the museum provides the bewildering optical illusion, the heartbeat-inducing cannonball sounds, the neighing horses, and the military marching band music. But it is the people who write their

[22] Daughter in Turkish is a common way to referring younger women.

declarative story over the feelings induced by the characteristics of this artificial place. They assign meanings to the "brain's confusion," – effervescence and excitement – thus turning them to emotions such as pride, honor, or disappointment.

Karen Cerulo (2018) applies a cognitive analysis to deciphering smells—olfactory sense-making, once again highlighting the importance of cognition "to understanding the nondeclarative-declarative relationship, because each form of culture is associated with a specific cognitive style." (2018:365). Through focus groups where people smelled three different types of perfumes, she uncovers the link between public codes and declarative culture, where "nondeclarative culture informed the initial, automatic responses to a scent, and declarative culture helped people elaborate or explain that response." (2018, 380) She then offers iterative reprocessing as a mechanism, where "bodies deliver sensations, and persons process those reactions based on autobiography and cultural messages that populate the contexts in which experiences occur." (380). At the museum, as in Cerulo's research, the non-declarative informs the first response, which for some manifests in crying. Then, the declarative culture helps make the mundane and scientific become sacred for some. The curator's intent may have been very different. Yet, as much as he can control the technical aspects of his creation, he cannot completely control the process of intrapersonal meaning-making.

My next field-note excerpt points to the iterative process between *declarative and nondeclarative*. The women keep talking about how they cannot explain how they feel, but then one of them jumps in to say how she is happy to see Mehmed the Conqueror in the clouds this time finally, or how they feel so proud at the museum. We also get a sense

of previous socialization as they refer to their history education which, according to them, just falls short compared to this dome of affect.

> Two younger women and one middle aged woman from Tokat were visiting Istanbul and chose to visit Panorama once again. One of the younger women told me that her favorite part of the panoramic picture was the way Fatih stands on his horse. They added that they are not the travelling type when they are back in Tokat, but they cannot skip the museum when in Istanbul "as the atmosphere is so unique and different". The younger woman inserted how the exploding cannonballs affect her in an inexplicable way, make her proud. And she told me, "I am extra happy this time because till today I had been unsuccessful in discovering the silhouette of Fatih in the clouds, but I saw it this time!" She also said that history classes never convey the conquest this well, they only read about the conquest in a textbook, but this museum just makes the whole thing come alive in her head. Her friend group now joined her and asserted that they are trying to be worthy of these people. In awe, they kept rhetorically asking to indicate their astonishment, "How did they conquer, how did they move these cannons, how did they win?" They kept murmuring, "how honoring, how magnificent."

As this excerpt conveys people come to the museum with previous national socialization, but the unique and powerful experience under the dome works intensely to bring about emotions that the classroom history education has not been able to achieve. Hearing cannonballs induces a visceral reaction no matter what, the optical illusion confuses people unequivocally, but it is the process of cognitive scaffolding that results in what my informant declares as "pride." When they choose to come back to the museum, as the next section shows, this declared emotion gets further etched into their subjectivity.

Repetition to Meanings

Randall Collins argues that meaning is generated in and by repeated social interactions. Rituals in this conception are grounded in emotional exchanges that connect people in varying situations in time and space (Collins 2004). Building on Durkheim and Goffman,

he points to the processual nature of the ritual where satisfaction intensifies, and people become more invested through the feedback they receive from a given ritual. People *want* to return to these intensified interactional moments, and become emotional energy seekers (ibid: 204). In this sense, emotions are both an outcome of the ritual and a motivator for future return. According to Collins, "an interaction ritual is an emotion transformer, taking some emotions as ingredients, and turning them into other emotions as outcomes. Short-term emotions carry across situations, in the form of emotional energy, setting up chains of interaction rituals over time" (ibid: 205). Here, I argue that the mechanism of conversion is not from emotion to emotion, but rather from raw feelings to articulate emotions. The museum is a vivid example of this interaction ritual chain, as it offers a powerful affective bond with the past, taking and calling back the visitor to the place and time of the conquest. Panorama offers a date with history, and people who get moved in the first visit usually seek the thrill again. The following examples are from informants who indicated their past visits and future plans of coming back.

> An older man was going around the museum enthusiastically holding his camera-phone up, sincerely documenting everything. I approached him and asked if he liked the museum. He kept smiling enthusiastically and shook his head "Yes". I asked him if he came before. He said: "This is the second time I am visiting." He said: "Next time I come; I plan to bring my grandchildren. I am sure they came with their school, but I want to bring them myself"
>
> Another day, I spotted a woman with two kids, and asked if they liked the museum. Both of the kids—who turned out to be fifth and seventh graders—nodded and smiled. I asked if this was their first visit. The woman said she had visited before and now she was bringing her nephews, who were visiting her from a nearby city. They were out and about on the tram sightseeing and she said, "We could not skip it". She added, "Especially when I see the city walls outside I can't help but feel that this is all so real, and all so realistic."

The museum is a place where people make meaning—during consecutive visits—turning feelings to emotions, and *nondeclarative* to *declarative*. Especially for those who return, the museum is a place of socialization into the nation through history.

> Two men in their seventies who came from Gungoren (district in Istanbul) were very impressed and quite animated when they were talking to me. One of them was visiting for the first time, where the other one has been to the museum multiple times and took the lead to show the museum to his friend. These were religious men, one of them carried prayer beads and both were wearing skullcaps. The older one said "we conquered the Dardanelles and Constantinople. We are Muslims and as long as we remain faithful, God will be with us". So, their legitimation of the "ownership" of these places is through Islam. They said that the ones who built this, did it really well, they are great men. Confused as to what they meant, I asked: "Do you mean the people who conquered Constantinople or the ones who built the museum? They replied enthusiastically: "both". So, Fatih and the municipality gained their appreciation at the same time.

Like the emotional energy seekers in Collin's theory this aforementioned man brought a friend along with him, as he wanted his friend to experience the greatness of this museum, and feel what he felt at the museum. They came to the museum not with a blank slate, but with ideas about who has the right to Istanbul. For them "being a Muslim" is a prerequisite. These men attribute the museum's greatness to the greatness of Islam as a religion. In their minds, people who built the museum become associated with people who conquered Constantinople. These emotional energy seekers pair the cannonball-induced feelings with a public culture that points to the greatness of Islam, and declare the right to conquer, build and own both Istanbul and the museum dedicated to it, thus finding their voice in a religiously informed nationalism.

Suffering for Istanbul: Gratefulness to Conquerors

One group of visitors, at the *declarative* level, had a strong conviction that people in the past suffered and sacrificed, first of all to conquer Istanbul, and second for the contemporary Istanbulites, meaning they did all this "suffering" for people in the future.

> Two sisters from Yeniköy neighborhood came to visit the nearby Merkezefendi Mosque, and ended up at the museum, and were in complete enjoyment. As they were in a mini spiritual pilgrimage, and the museum cued a focus on the identity of Istanbul, the older one told me how the city is protected by its spirituality. This reminded me the similar old adage that Istanbul is protected by the saints buried underground, a belief which was especially common in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake; "Istanbul would never collapse completely, as a shield emanating from numerous saints buried under protects it". [Istanbul'u evliyalar koruyor.] These women were very much in tune with that spirituality as they went on telling me how Eyüp Sultan [Abu Ayyub] was martyred here in Istanbul, and how his tomb is sacred. Cemile jumped in to say "The people in the past suffered for me, but the way we act is not worthy of their sacrifice." One more time, they went back to how serendipitous it is for them to having stumbled upon the museum, how it was an utterly wonderful "kismet" …She emphasized again how different and special Istanbul is, and how much she loves sightseeing and praying during Ramadan, Eyüp Sultan being one of their pilgrimage stops. She added how thankful she is for Marmaray, the underground metro passing through Bosphorus, which made it possible for them to travel here from the Asian side, and how grateful she is for this great kismet of a museum.

Who knows what Fatih was thinking, besides "*Either I conquer Istanbul, or it will conquer me*." Nevertheless, it is significant that people think of him as somebody who would do things for people five centuries down the line. This group of people also put a responsibility on contemporary Istanbulites' shoulders that they need to know this city and its past. Their call read as follows: "People need to come here to the museum to learn about how their city was acquired, and they also need to mourn it, because it is not used to be what it is anymore." Here at this highly *declarative* level these sisters articulate their gratefulness for Istanbul, its saints and also the underground rail Marmaray that

made their visit possible. Marmaray is a service from the municipality, and like the two previous older men who were thankful for the conquerors both old and contemporary, these women conflate Islamic saints, the new means of transportation and Istanbul as a wonderful city full of serendipity. This encounter underlines the importance of spatial priming, because visitors usually come to Panorama 1453 as part of a mini pilgrimage route, or as part of "faith tourism" as the museum director has called it. Visiting shrines and mosques before the museum prime them for a sentimental experience. The museum itself is located right next to the shrine and mosque of Merkez Efendi. The Eyüp Sultan mosque, home to Abu Ayyub's shrine[23], is close and is regarded as a holy site that attracts urban pilgrims on a daily basis.

Others took gratitude for the exhibit further, exclaiming that Istanbulites worthy of the name had a duty to visit the exhibit:

> Two men who were in their mid to late thirties told me that liked the exhibit a lot. They said they will immediately share their pictures on Facebook. They sounded very enthusiastic, kept smiling and were mischievously happy, as if they did something fun but not so acceptable. The one who was eager to talk said that he liked the interactive exhibit the most. He said, "Most importantly Istanbulites should visit the exhibit to understand where they live and perceive with what kind of difficulty this place was acquired."

As the above excerpt reminds, the museum became an artificial pilgrimage ground, to show one's gratitude to the Ottoman warriors who suffered for the future Istanbulites and fought for Istanbul with great difficulty.

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[23] Abu Ayyub, who was part of the first Arab siege of Constantinople hundreds of years ago, is considered a Saint because he was a companion of Mohammed (Hammond, 2014). Discovery of his shrine during the siege was regarded as an auspicious event and harbinger of the conquest. Today, it is a historical space from where the urban dreamers grasp on their futures, by making wishes to Eyüp Sultan.

Mourning, and "Why can't we do it today?"

The previous sections have shown how feelings become national emotions. This section displays how immediate feelings get complicated and contested through an iterative process between the so-called rider and elephant. For a group of visitors at the museum, this added iterative process between the *nondeclarative* and *declarative* resulted from a weak coupling between the experiential state at the museum and the stated emotions. The feelings felt at the museum did not seem to match their general sentiment about the current affairs in Istanbul, or Turkey, which then led to a disappointment, or a mourning of a bygone glorious past. In the following excerpt a woman laments the loss of places that were once part of the Ottoman Empire, and labels Istanbul with sadness.

> A group of three women, one middle aged and two younger women were going around the exhibit. The older one agreed to talk to me. She sadly said, "there is nothing left from the Ottoman Empire anymore, we neither have Jerusalem nor other places that we had". She continued to lament that "Istanbul is a beautiful city, but it is crying, because not enough attention is given to it. It is not as beautiful as it was once, it is no more the capital as it was in the Ottoman Empire".

Similarly, the ongoing war in the Southeast along with the 2016 bombings in Istanbul triggered people to comment on how in the past "Turks have defeated the enemy" with resources considerably less than what "we" have today, and that they were surprised that today "we" are not as victorious as "we" were then [in 1453]. People get excited about what they see, hear, and experience at the museum. As visible in earlier field-note excerpts, countless times I observed how visitors' faces changed and how they beamed with astonishment and awe once they entered the panoramic exhibit. Gasps, gawks, and poking each other were common behavior. Yet, this feeling state made some people

question “the state we are in” today. Here, there seemed to be a mismatch between the *declarative*, and *nondeclarative* culture. The state of mind in the museum does not seem to align with the perceived state of affairs in the country today, which makes people ask questions like: “Why are people not protective of something that we have won with such difficulty?” The following field notes display this perfectly:

> A group of six women from Istanbul was led by a friend who had been to the museum before. She discovered the place in their mosque visit during Ramadan, and this year she has brought friends along. She said “there was no atom or anything [no atomic bomb], they fought with stones and dirt, yet they won this war. Look at us now, we have everything, but we can’t win, we sacrifice another soldier by the day. We have so many martyrs”.
>
> From another day:
>
> As I was leaning on the railing, observing people in the surroundings, an older man approached me with his friend and started talking. He said: “See, this is how they conquered Istanbul, now they are trying to divide this country. The ones who are trying to divide this country should come and see this place. I immediately took this invitation and started asking questions. I asked if he liked the museum and if this was the first time that he was visiting. He shook his right hand, pursing his lower lip and closed his eyes, a bodily expression people use to signal: *many times*. Smiling, he said he was bringing a friend this occasion. As a war veteran he was invited to the opening of the museum with his family. From that day on, the museum has been one of his favorite spots so he keeps coming back. When I asked him “how do you feel when you are here?” he said that he can only feel and experience the emotions that he feels when he is here and can’t really explain in words. His emotions are beyond articulation, but coming here gives him a feeling of overwhelming enthusiasm.

These two instances highlight how visitors engage in complex and layered feelings, in an iterative fashion, interpretations ranging between happiness, enthusiasm, pride and loss of power, mourning of lost glory and sentimental reminiscence. Even though the aforementioned veteran told me he does not know how to explain his feelings in words on a *declarative* level, I interpret his cue to me as disappointment and a quick route from pride to resentment. His inarticulate excitement gets uttered as the need to

make the ungrateful "ones who are trying to divide this country" have an emotional attachment to the nation similar to the one that he experiences at the museum.

Better study them!

The other iterative process between the rider and the elephant is the worry about "other people" at the museum, which I call "projected reception anxiety." At points this anxiety became a suspicion of one's self that coalesced in the statement: "I don't want to be a part of the herd." The sentiment was that if you stayed at the museum long enough, you might come under a spell. In particular, people were worried that other people at the museum were ready to be swept away. For many, this concern with "over-emotionality" was linked to suspicion of the museum's politics: by putting the conquest at the forefront, did the Museum of Conquest appropriate historical space that should be allocated to the (modernist) founding father, Ataturk?

The following excerpt is from a field note centered on the banter between two women, part of a bigger group of friends visiting the museum on a spring day. They were in their seventies, outspoken and dressed up for their visit, filling the stale air of the museum with a mix of commercial perfume.

> The most outspoken one, whom I will call Leyla, said that she found the museum really beneficial, and went on to say "kids today are very lucky; we did not have interactive experiences like this available to us. This place makes you really feel the history, it's different than the books." Then, she became a bit contemplative and said "Well, we are already educated in these matters, what makes me happy is seeing people here who are not as educated." At this point, her friend Necla, who looked restless and impatient, pointed to a group of people with headscarves, and told me that I would probably be better off if I studied those people rather than them. While Leyla—embarrassedly—tried to put her friend's pointing hand down, she said "Well, it's good that they are at least learning some history". As I did not comment, Leyla went on with her interpretation of the museum "Fatih is really impressive and important, he is a very important man for Turkish history,

> he created a new civilization," and hastily added, "Well, [don't get me wrong], we are of course Kemalists [Ataturkcuyuz]." Necla became visibly angry at this and loudly inserted "I would never compare anyone to Ataturk, he is the one and only and the most important." With this signal Leyla tried to underline her own unwavering Kemalism saying "Well Fatih led the path and Ataturk followed." Probably to reassure Necla that her liking of Fatih does not change her worldview, she told us: "Well, yeah, not everybody comes here with the same kind of educational motivation, I saw a person praying with open hands, God knows who she was praying for, Fatih? Martyrs?

This interaction set off by my question, "what did you think of the museum?" is packed with layers of Turkish history, as well as boundary-making, showing how people solidify their own group and position through assumptions about other people in everyday encounters. Leyla assumes that people with headscarves are uneducated, and should be educated, and a trip to the museum potentially does that. Her belief in the museum's educational potential is shaken by her suspicion of people praying to "God knows whom." She feels the need to reassure both me and her friend that appreciating Fatih does not take away from her loyalty to Ataturk. Necla, on the other hand, thinks that if I am to find anything about this museum, I should be studying the ones who don't look like them. In fact many informants questioned whether they themselves were the "right" audience to my questions. "Shouldn't you ask the tourists, shouldn't you study [insert other groups]?" "Isn't it obvious what a Turkish national would feel in this museum?" Leyla and Necla see the praying hands, and that sight makes them anxious about the possible audience of the prayer, and the non-educational intentions behind a museum visit. Are "other people" capable of keeping the experience educational rather than indulging in inappropriate emotions and religiosity? What this indicates is that people are quite sure what others are thinking, and feeling. When prompted they often talk not about themselves, but others, either within or outside the nation. Most importantly, this interaction reveals a general

wariness of emotions: if there is too much emotion, there is danger. Signs of too much emotion (and a projected lack of education) in other visitors made them worried about "certain groups" who were susceptible to be carried away.

Wariness of others' emotions was echoed in my interaction with a retired engineer, a slim man with receding black hair. I approached him as he was lingering around the model of the museum, and asked what he thought about the museum. He told me that his wife, who is a retired teacher, recommended the museum to him, as she visited a similar one in the Netherlands. He followed her advice and decided to check it out, as he was bored at home that day. It turned out, he was a bit lost in the museum. So, I showed him the stairs leading to the dome, and told him to find me when he was done, because I was curious about his opinion".

As he came back, he interrogated me before I could ask him anything, "who was I, what was I doing here?" Where did I go for high school, or college? What did I study, and was I affiliated with the museum or the municipality? Once reassured by my social scientific credentials, he proceeded. He told me that he was a retired engineer, who now took time to sightsee and acquire culture, because he had little time for such things when he worked. He also assured me that he would not want to talk to any other stranger, but that he felt comfortable talking to me. Then he started pouring out his thoughts:

> I love the technology and technicality behind the museum, personally, I feel that everything gets better and beautiful with technology. But, I am not so sure about 'the message' they are trying to convey…I am not happy with the way we live, how things are in Turkey right now. I do not like herd mentality, and I do not follow what others say, I want to have my own opinion about things, and do not want to believe what others believe. I know that every country has a similar history like this, like their own version of the Conquest. They tell a heroic story at this museum, but I think history should be objective and scientific, I am not sure if this is the case here, this is more like a story, tale, or maybe myth. Of course, I

> do not deny we have a heroic past, I also know and am fond of the poem that goes 'We have entered the Turkic land on our horsebacks," but should we really focus on this one day [the Conquest]? Should we keep telling this one story? I am not sure. I read novels about the Ottoman past, as far as I know, Justinian [sic] died during the siege, but this is not the story told here. I am not necessarily denying the past, but I am not sure about this guidance, direction, or manipulation.

After our interaction he left and apparently went back to the dome, observed some more and came back to me, this time wanting to better articulate what he was getting at. He said "These days we need prudence, we need to be sensible, in this political climate. I am not sure if this museum fosters that. Rather, what I see upstairs is people wanting to get swept and carried away, people who want to feel exuberant, enthusiastic and excited. I am not sure if these are the feelings we need. This makes me scared." Then he told me that he is very curious how many of those who talk to me feel like him, if there are people who feel like him, and reasserted that people should not feel "so effervesced" or exuberant. He left, saying he hoped to one day hear my name.

It is striking how the 19th century anxieties of Namık Kemal and Şinasi are genealogically present in this retired engineer from 21st century. He is in awe with the technology and engineering behind the museum, and supports a scientific view of history like Şinasi did. Yet, he is also cognizant that every nation has a mythological past epitomized in moving poems, and bombastic ballads—which Namık Kemal would prescribe for a "healthy society," These two streams running in his Turkish psyche, the rational and emotional, one calling for science, and the other for a dazzling history, create an oscillating energy field which makes him ambiguous towards the museum. Should he follow the mythical pull, or respond to the scientific push? I think, in his case, this

ambiguous state results in a worry about the others. What if "they" listen to the mythical pull too much, to be carried away in a political climate marked by intensive rift.

The way things are

In a stroke of fieldwork luck, I got to spend a day with a group of Turkish women on a tour with their friends from Belgium. I ran into them at the entrance of the museum, and they needed a translator so I joined their day-long adventure in Istanbul. The following is an excerpt from my field-notes of that day.

> Before we left, I had another chance to ask about their opinion of the museum. One of the Turkish women, Melike, petite with short brunette hair, and a fancy professional camera dangling on her neck said: "It is all very nice and fun, but one asks oneself: Why the conquest? Why are we still bragging about something that happened 600 years ago?" Sibel got visibly annoyed by this comment and asserted loudly waving her long hair: "Well, what else if not the conquest? What are they going to build a museum for? Conquest is extremely important!" Melike wasn't so sure if we still needed to brag about something so old, whereas for Sibel, this open-ended question did not require further speculation, or brainstorming "if conquest is not worthy of celebrating what is?"

A lot of people at the museum shared Sibel's certainty. What "they" should be feeling was a given and universal and set in stone, they were baffled why I would even ask them how they found the museum and thought that it was straight forward. "Well, of course, I got teary eyed, but isn't that how I am supposed to feel?" "Isn't this how things are?" Some of these people advised me to ask the tourists instead of Turks, because, they thought, I would always get the same answer from a fellow national. A young woman I interviewed was baffled at my inquiry:

> Two younger women in their twenties were meticulously wandering around with their audio guides on, paying attention to details. When I asked them about their reactions to the interactive exhibit, one of them, whom I am going to call Nesrin, jumped in and said that she got quite teary eyed. Her friend, Tansu furrowed her eyebrows and looked confused, quite baffled at me and her friend's eager

> response. She asked me: "Have you seen the exhibit? Everything is quite obvious in the museum, it portrays a straightforward message which would not change from person to person." Then, she went on to tell me that a better way to conduct my research probably would be to ask tourists and find out what they thought about the museum. Yet, she did not fail to add that everybody who lives in Istanbul should come and learn about their own history.

So here, Tansu reasserted a monolithic Turkish imagined community, with every single Turkish person feeling the same amidst the siege. Even though I got a variety of reactions from the Turkish visitors, many shared Tansu's confidence in their own similarity to their fellow citizens, showing the continuing power of museums in creating a sense of belonging, and reproducing the nation. Even though differently expressed, this instance comes back to the strong coupling between declarative and nondeclarative. When prompted, people are baffled why they are even asked how they are feeling. Isn't this how every Turk feels? Isn't this the way "how things are?"

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Mechanisms of Feeling State</td><td colspan="3">Priming by the historical peninsula
Residue of Mini Pilgrimage
Physical Sensations
Audio-visual Perception
Spatial experience under the dome
Collective Effervescence
↓↓↓↓</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">[Non-Declarative] Feeling State</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3"></td><td colspan="3">Cognitive Process
↓↓↓↓</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strong Coupling
↓</td><td colspan="2">Weak Coupling
↓</td></tr>
<tr><td>[Declarative] Emotions</td><td>Gratefulness
Pride
Astonishment
Awe
Delight
Exuberance
Suffering
Declaration of Inexplicability
Tacit emotions: “Why ask me?”</td><td>Disbelief
Resentment
Mourning</td><td>Projected Reception Anxiety: Worry About “too much” emotionality</td></tr>
</table>

Table 3: Feelings to Emotions at the Museum

Conclusion

I explored the *Museum of Conquest* as an intimate site of emotional engagement with the Ottoman past, showing how audio-visual and sensational cues, and the intrapersonal are brought together, albeit to different degrees, to elicit embodied, non-verbal or *nondeclarative* responses from the audience (Lizardo 2017). For the first analytical group, these embodied reactions remain at the *nondeclarative* personal level: *felt* yet not within a reach of immediate articulation. Mostly though, museumgoers interpret these sensations through an additional cognitive process, tying *nondeclarative* and *declarative culture* together. In a case of *strong coupling* they attach nationalist meanings already embedded in *public culture* to the experience. People articulate feeling pride and hoping to be worthy of the ancestors’ sacrifice.

When there is a *weak coupling* between *declarative* and *nondeclarative* culture on a personal level, the felt state does not seamlessly match one's *declarative* interpretation. In the museum case, this is manifested by worry that fellow emotive citizens might be getting too carried away—losing grounding in reason. In other words, even though the museum puts visitors in similar *nondeclarative* visceral states, when these feelings do not match their *declarative* personal culture, people articulate concern about those people who "might feel" a strong overlap with this *declarative* and *nondeclarative* personal culture. This worry about "too much emotion" is articulated as a concern about people being too carried away via national emotions at a time of a need in sensibility.

In making sense of their feelings, interlocutors alluded to the suffering of the people of the past, and the need to be worthy of these long-gone people's sacrifice. They showed gratefulness for the long-gone conquerors who make living in Istanbul possible today. They mourned Istanbul, and lost prosperity and glory, while trying to make sense of a Turkey ridden with ethnic conflict by pointing to a dissonance between *declarative and nondeclarative* personal culture. Some were baffled at my interest in their opinion, questioning: *Doesn't everybody feel just the same?*

My analysis thus suggests a cognitive link between feelings and emotions, influenced both by the personal history, and the snow-globe effect of the museum. Rather than just assuming that the emotional and the cognitive are always hand in hand, or in juxtaposition, I have argued that a cognitive process can work to link feelings and articulated emotions. There is no tug of war between cognition and emotions, but an additional cognitive process involved to move from feelings to emotions. Differentiating these three levels of analysis—personal in *declarative* and *nondeclarative* forms, and

public—has provided analytical clarity as to how a dialogue with the nation occurs through an engagement with a historical device, and a contested web of relationship with fellow citizens at the museum. This chapter has shown that emotions are a result of a deliberative cognitive process, and are dependent on the subject's historical position. In other words, even a well-designed political project to curate the "right" emotions is highly unpredictable. Even at *Panorama*—an emotional percolator sealed to the outside—the personal experience is highly variable. What makes one person prideful or nostalgic can leave another anxious. More than anything, the museum ethnography shows that engendering emotional response out of people is a difficult process. Emotions involve a complex cognitive meaning-making process, and the curation thereof is an art. That's why I wince when I read yet another lament that "angry nostalgic voters are the reason of our demise." Emotions, unlike this argument, result from hard work.

CHAPTER 6

Resurrection! "*This Series Is Based on Characters and Events from OUR History*"

Erdogan and Ertuğrul—both compound words, are common male names in Turkish. The first word of the compound, "er" means male person, warrior, or soldier. Dogan and Tugrul are both birds of prey. Dogan is of this world—the falcon; and the other, Tugrul, mythological, appears in Turkish myths, not unlike the Phoenix in its ability to be born again. When one dissects these warrior-bird-words even further, one discovers that they share the root, dog, tog, or tug—to be born, to rise. The sun does not rise in Turkish, but it is born. These male warrior birds, resurrected from the depths of history, are born again in contemporary Turkey, flying together, like the double-headed eagle, endemic to Near Eastern iconography. Erdogan, the president of Turkey and the founder of the AKP, and the fictionalized Ertuğrul—father of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, merge into one, powered by the song Dombra. The song, which we have encountered as the campaign song in the previous chapter on the Conquest Rally, is also the soundtrack of the TV Series, *Resurrection Ertuğrul*. Endorsed by President Erdogan, *Resurrection Ertuğrul* aired between 2014-2019, and has been an instant hit domestically. Now, Netflix airs the show, indicating its global appeal. Most recently, Egypt has banned *Resurrection Ertuğrul*, among other Turkish series, which they claim, is Erdogan's propaganda to revive the Ottoman Empire in the region.

In this chapter, I will engage in an in-depth analysis of the very first—or the founding episode of *Resurrection Ertuğrul*, to establish its significance for neo-Ottomanism, and what it did to Ottomania. As it's our last stop in Ottoman nostalgia, I will explain how this series differs from *Magnificent Century*, where we started our journey. Relying on discourse analysis, I will show the metaphorical backbone of the script, its core sensibilities and the public reaction to it. This chapter will provide the opportunity to delve into the gender roles articulated by the series and offer a look into what kind of men and women make up the neo-Ottoman nostalgia. First, I will talk about the portrayal of the severe divide between Christianity and Islam. Second focus will be the moral structure of the series' universe. Looking at the council gathering of the tribe will help deconstruct the nomadic environment anchored in traditional authority. Third, I will analyze Ertuğrul as an honorable yet lonely hero situating him in the nomadic adventure, and draw parallels between the nostalgic-populist self-portrayal of Erdogan in the Conquest rally. Then, I will pay attention to modest, hardworking and unassuming women who guide and move Ertuğrul, the figure of the mother, who talks in "lessons" and the resilient girl, who is so modest that she can't even bear to look into his eyes. Lastly, relying on interview data I will show the strong appeal of the show among a segment of the population. Here, I will recount my interviewees' comparison of *Magnificent Century* to *Resurrection Ertuğrul,* as well as their own interpretation of why they are drawn to it, and how others are swept by it.

The story starts in 1225 and is set in the nomadic Kayi Tribe's landing amidst the mountains, a landing granted by the influential Seljuks—a strong Muslim Empire in the region. In the first episode Ertuğrul, the son of the *Bey* [chief] goes on a hunt in the

middle of a famine. During the hunt Ertuğrul's crew end up running into a fight between Muslim prisoners and the Christian warriors, members of the Templars. To save the prisoners Ertuğrul and his crew kill all the Christian soldiers, including Bisol, the brother of Titus—a very influential and notorious Templar. Ertuğrul and the modest prisoner girl—who might be a secret princess—seem to be taken to each other. The pilot also introduces us to schemers within the tribe, and a notorious Seljuk general Karatoygar, who abuses his power and sides with Christians secretly. During the regular council meeting, the tribe decides to move to Aleppo to escape the famine, if they get a permission granted. This council meeting gets interrupted by Karatoygar, who demands the prisoners back. The head of the tribe refuses to hand them back as it's against Kayi's honorable customs to give away guests. At the end of the episode, to Ertuğrul's brother demise, the Bey picks Ertuğrul to be the messenger to Aleppo, and he sets on his journey.

The Hard-Working Muslim Kayis and Notorious Christian Templars

The narrative in the first episode is woven around the clashing forces of Islam and Christianity. The duality of the oppressor and the oppressed map perfectly unto Christianity and Islam. Both parties are very strong believers, and it seems that under this nostalgic past there isn't much room for nuances such as half-hearted disciples or part-time warriors. The nomadic Kayis—who are under constant threat of dismantling as people both domestic and foreign are conspiring—are Muslims who advocate for the unity of Islamic world. As we get familiar with the Kayis, we grasp that their temporary home, arranged with tents and workstations is simple but joyous. The camp seems to be always sunny and busy with hard work. Women are always weaving, smiths are

relentlessly hammering iron, and people are cooking or carrying water. The benevolent and cheerful outlook of the surroundings give one the sense that this is where "good things" happen. On the other hand, the Christian Templars live in a dark castle full of crosses where everything seems to be a monotone grey. In the very first two scenes we are introduced to these strong binaries:

Two big men, one middle-aged, bearded and heavy-set, and one young, tall, dark and handsome, are battering a still hot sword together in order to mold it to its final shape, while rhythmically chanting Allah is great and Allah is one. The young one, who we later learn to be Ertuğrul, says "even the iron couldn't stand against the will of Allah, and converted to Islam". The ironsmith hands him another sword, and Ertuğrul looks at it with adoring eyes. The ironsmith goes "I hope this sword shall be the voice of the oppressed, and the end of oppressors, in the hands of the hero that you are, Insallah". Ertuğrul says something even more honorable, which delights the ironsmith immensely. He goes on to swear that he would sacrifice himself to the mighty Allah who has created and sent Ertuğrul to this world. In response, Ertuğrul says he will carry this sword honorably in the love of Allah, and in the name of his ancestor "Oghuz."

As soon as we get introduced to the main character, we quickly meet its counterpart, which immediately sets the tone of evil Christianity against the benevolent iron-bending Islam: We are looking at the walls of a Gothic castle, the seat of "the Templars," where an assassin seems to be climbing the wall with his bare hands. Whenever we cut to this dark castle full of crosses in the future, a mystic yet ominous church hymn accompanies the scene. Contrary to the merry grounds of the Kayis, Templar grounds look gloomy, frigid and cold. The wall-climbing assassin jumps in and

kills two soldiers, and unmasks himself, showing his thin bearded face and greasy hair. He yells "Guard is your duty and pride, and if you neglect it, you will die at my hands and not at the enemy's" revealing that he—Titus, is from inside the castle. Him and another ominous man, in important-looking Christian garb, enter the dark and gloomy castle to discuss what to do with the Muslim prisoners they have captured. We learn that they have been captured because they declined to be coerced to side with Christians in secret and be their puppet. These Muslims are so honorable, they refused to be the new reign under the Christian influence. This scene introduces us how ruthless the Christians are, killing their own to make a point, that they have imprisoned honorable Muslims, and they are about to infiltrate the Seljuk castle—the most powerful Muslim Empire in the region. The two Christian men discuss the character Karatoygar's crucial role in infiltrating the Seljuk Palace. Karatoygar, a Seljuk commander is depicted as a treacherous Muslim, who exploits his role by subjecting the lay folk—like those of the Kayi tribe, to unjust taxes.

The audience is repeatedly presented with the idea that the otherwise harmonious Muslim ummah is at risk of dismantling as the Christian forces are working hard to breed bad blood among Muslims. For example, in the same scene, the dark and slimy Christian figure tells Titus "Before the crusade we should weaken the Seljuks, plant more of our guys to the Seljuk palace. We need to provoke the Muslims to bad deeds, so the Christian world unites against them, motivated for this upcoming crusade." He adds "Muslim blood will always be shed, and it will be shed by the alliances we have made with other Muslim friends." They brainstorm if the "spoiled princes of Europe" are to be trusted to come

along during a Crusade, and how to defeat Seljuk Sultan Aladdin, as they are living their Golden Age:

> *Titus: How can we trust the spoiled princes of Europe to come along?*
> *SG: Well, they will come along if we pit the Muslims against each other.*
> *Titus: What about the Seljuks? How can we defeat Aladdin, when they are living their golden age? How are we going to manage to defeat them?*
> *SG: Well, the day we can pit Salahaddin Ayyubi's grandkids against the Turks, we will reach our goal. Jerusalem will be ours.*

As they converse, a dramatic Christian hymn escalates in the background, warning the audience about the impending Christian conspiracy. These two early-on scenes, not only provide the viewer with easy to grasp dualities of Christianity versus Islam, but also offer an explanation on how Islam would fail in this two sided war: by being divided with the "help" of treacherous insiders. Turks of Kayi, the people who will plant the seeds of the founding of the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, are unassuming and hardworking people, who see the power of Allah and Islam even as they labor on a piece of iron. They do not attack Christians out of nowhere, but they are provoked into taking action, and Christians are successful at the provocation game, because of the power-pursuing weak links at the *oba*—the temporary settlement of nomadic tribes, and Seljuk Empire.

We are constantly shown how atrociously bad the Christians are against the Muslims. For example, at a scene, a row of very notable Muslim men's heads is systematically chopped by Titus. Cutting the first head off, he yells Seljuk Sultan Aladdin's hand! Then he moves to the "Right hand of the Caliph Omar." And he screams: "Now all the Muslim World shall cry out revenge…" At the same dramatic scene, his brother Bisol's dead body on a horseback is ushered by two soldiers through

the castle gates. Titus yells: Who did this? Titus is outraged and besides himself overcome with fury. Soldiers reply: They were ambushed as they were bringing in the prisoners. Titus yells again: I said who [did this]? Soldiers reply: The Kayis. But we don't know who. Titus hugs his brother and says forgive me father. I could not protect him, kisses his head.

After Titus buries his brother, he says, "it should have been me instead of you brother", while holding the cross in his hands. He goes on:

> *I will fight until the ones' breed/kin who did to you goes extinct! I will fight until they are deep buried under the soil. Your blood will not remain on the ground my brother, you will be revenged. I promise you. If God isn't on my side on my path to revenge, I will turn to devils and [make a pact with them.] I will bring hell upon the Turkmens. I will be their wrath until I die. I promise you. Forgive me father.*

As he mourns his brother, the man in a black cape prays ominous things in Latin. It's hard for the audience to feel sorry for Titus and his brother, as they have been depicted as scheming ominous characters from the beginning. Titus clearly is not a redeemable figure, as he is even ready to have a pact with daemons. Moreover, he does not swear to avenge "the person who did this to you." He promises that he will not rest in peace till everybody of Ertuğrul's potential future breed goes extinct. This sets an unresolvable animosity, that might even be affecting the viewer's kin, as citizens of the Turkish Republic are supposed to be the "descendants," of the Turks and Ottomans. Clearly, they have not succeeded. Yet.

Muslim traitors play a special and very important part in the plot. People who I have interviewed drew parallels between how in the contemporary world there are people among Muslims who are trying to dismantle the Turkish state. These power-hungry

traitor characters teach the Turkish audience to mistrust and conspiratorial thinking. In this next scene for example, Titus and the traitor Karatoygar have a meeting as Titus tries to find the person who killed his brother:

> *Titus: What do you want from me to give me the name?*
> *Karatoygar: I will give you more than you want. I will deliver him directly to your hands. This is not business; do you understand me? It's an assistance to a friend in pain…. It's Süleyman Shah's son Ertuğrul [who killed your brother].*
> *Karatoygar tells Titus that Ertuğrul has gone on a journey with four Alps[warriors].*
> *Karatoygar: Eye for an eye, divine justice.*
> *Titus: Where is he going?*
> *Karatoygar: Aleppo.*
> *Titus: I should take my revenge with my own hands…*
> *Karatoygar: Don't you worry; I will present him to you like a sacrificial ram.*

Here, we are presented with evidence of how Christians are succeeding in infiltrating the Muslim stronghold Seljuk's rule. A powerful commander is scheming with Christians and gives away the proud and powerful Ertuğrul. This conspiratorial plot socializes the audience to think that there is always a potential infiltration of a benevolent rule by dark forces, both from the inside: Karatoygar, and outside: Titus. I am not a historian, and not necessarily interested in the accuracy of the plot. After all, both *Resurrection Ertuğrul* and *Magnificent Century* emphasize that they are inspired by history, yet, even a quick search reveals that we don't know much about the nitty-gritties about the Seljuk past, Templars or Ertuğrul *Bey*. It is a choice to present a constant animosity between Christians and Muslims, an animosity so strong that a Templar can chop heads of people as important as a caliph's hand, as a daily activity. The series are fiction, yet it's important to recognize that it's not *Game of Thrones*, or *The Lord of the Rings*—fantasies based on created universes. The audiences have a higher chance of taking this depiction as a proof to centuries long animosity between the people of the book.

The characters, as the later sections of this chapter will also highlight, unlike their counterparts in *Magnificent Century*, are very rigid. Unlike the ambiguous, and identity-seeking personalities at the Topkapi Palace these people are either immensely good, or horribly bad. Magnificent Century's heroes and heroines with their ambivalent pasts, and ambiguous personalities resulting from conversion from Christianity to Islam is juxtaposed to neo-Ottomanism's essentialist interpretations of personhood.

The Toy Scene—Council Meeting

Weberian traditional authority is at the center of the fictional nomad's life, and things are governed through the notion of honor. This type of authority rests on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (Weber 1968:1115–17). Allah's mercy and might are felt through the harsh condition of the nature and matters of survival. An authoritarian leader governs the tribe yet does not bow down to forces of the state. If Süleyman of *Magnificent Century* has successfully settled down at his palace bedecked with jewelry, the Süleyman Shah of the nomads is modest and stern. In the heart of the true Muslim pastoral life and fear of Allah merge into one cemented belief in tradition embodied by the *Bey*. Excerpts from the council meeting are a perfect place to observe the depiction of this traditional authority in the face of austere circumstances:

Men are busy brooding at the *toy*—council meeting. The agenda is where to move next. In the tent, all men are gathered around Süleyman Shah—the father and the *Bey*, sitting on the floor. The room is dimly lit, with the color red dominating. Süleyman Shah

sits with a proud posture, in front of the Kayi banner with the IYI signs—symbolizing a bow and two arrows—imprinted. They start with a prayer:

> *"Not on the ground, not in the sky, only in the heart of a true believer, there is one, one that makes all the creation one, the one who is compassionate and merciful, Allah. In Allah's name, we wish that between the blue skies, and the dark grounds, our kin, our boy, our oba, our sons, and our daughters may be united in one, may they be free, may they be healthy. May our toy be merry, in the presence of our Bey who spreads justice. Amen."*

Süleyman Shah: "In the ninety-nine names of one who makes it be, when he says be, in the name of the one who fills our hearts with belief, in the name of Allah, let's start; Ya Bismillah. As the prayer indicates, the pastoral might of the skies, the ground, and Allah's mercy merge in the heart of the true believer. Unity, oneness, and kin are at the center of the nomads' life, with justice drawn from tradition cementing them all.

He announces, "My *Beys*, my warriors, the leaders of my *Boy* [clan], welcome and be blessed." "Thank Allah, before we set on the road, a trader has come to buy our goods." "Well, selling the goods is not our biggest problem, a *Bey* jumps in, "Our animals are in bad shape, as there is no grazing area left from the famine, we need to leave and find a fertile pastureland as soon as possible." Süleyman Shah is now visibly angry: "What are we supposed to do? The Moghols have invaded everywhere, famine is everywhere, should we fight our Muslim brothers to find pasture?"

> *Another Bey: "Is Allah's mercy not on us Beyim, we have been camping on these grounds for months now? We can't seem to find a solution, we have been here forever, since when have Kayıs been so desperate? What are we going to do when we can't find a solution? How is our "yurt" [homeland, heimat] going to survive? Wild Demir: "Since when have we forgotten Allah, the bringer of prosperity?" Our dough, what we have been made of, is kneaded with patience." –Our souls are kneaded with patience. Whatever is delivered from the skies, that's what we receive."*

Another Bey: "We have learned what patience is, by going around without a yurt, Wild Demir." Our wish is that our descendants are not without a yurt either."
Don't tell us what patience is.
Süleyman Shah: When did I ever leave you hungry or naked that you would worry so much about sustenance?
Another Bey: "Never Beyim—my Bey, I did not mean that"
Kurdoglu: Well, Bey, you never did that, and yet we did not leave you without warriors or weapons. Well, we say, we should find a new home and migrate.
Süleyman Shah asks: Where?
Kurdoglu: Anywhere where our sheep can survive. Wherever our white sheep can survive. Let's go back to our forefather's lands, they say the Moghol invaders are getting weaker.
Süleyman Shah: Whoever says that is a liar, the Moghol bandits are like hungry wolves, still attacking.
Gundogdu, the older son of Süleyman Shah, goes: Aleppo, I have heard that the Amir of Aleppo is gathering an army to fight against the Crusaders.
Kurdoglu: What is on your heart nephew? [Here the dombra song is played in strings again]
Gundogdu: I say, let's send a messenger to Aleppo, and the messenger should say, if you give us land to set our tents on and we will give you soldiers and weapons, this way we can both become martyrs fighting against the Crusaders, and finally have someplace we can call home.
Kurdoglu: Let's get on with it immediately!
Süleyman Shah: Since when things are done without I have given my permission? Aghas, do you accept Gundogdu's idea?
Kurdoglu: I am sorry Bey!
Men put their hands on their heart and bow in approval.
Süleyman Shah: I approve of it too; insallah it brings prosperity.
Men whisper insallah.

As this above council scene shows, the conversation is centered around an authoritarian leader, who is very stern, whose anger is easily ignited, who takes his power from customs, "the tradition". But, at the same time, he listens and gives others the chance to speak up. He is proud, his purpose is to provide for his tribe, and exist as a non-state, nomadic entity. Unlike the *Magnificent Century's* Ottomans who have comfortable settled down at the Palace, these are modest and hardworking warriors who are struggling to survive in spite of the state. In a way, they remind one of the non-state entities in Scott's the *Art of Not Being Governed* (2009). Shah's reply to Karatoygar shows once

again how “honor” is a very important part of the core sensibilities in the universe of *Resurrection Ertuğrul*:

> *The Toy gets interrupted with Karatoygar arriving at the camp to inquire about the prisoners.*
>
> *Karatoygar enters: “Süleyman Shah, some tactless people in your tribe have smeared our honor.”*
> *Süleyman Shah: The honor of the Sultan who gave a home to my oba is my honor, Karatoygar. What did we do to dishonor Sultan Aladdin and his commander?*
> *Karatoygar: This axe came from the back of the man you have killed! You ambushed a messenger crew, and killed their chevalier. As if that was not enough, you kidnapped three prisoners the regiment was taking to the Sultan. Give back those prisoners!*
> *Süleyman Shah: You talk as if you don’t know our customs, Karatoygar, we do not give away the guest who has come to our oba, especially if they are wounded.*
> *Karatoygar: I came here as a representative of the Seljuk Sultan. You have to obey what I say, the way you would obey what the Sultan would say. Or else, you know what would happen Süleyman Shah!*
> *Süleyman Shah: We live and die by our customs, Karatoygar. We know the Sultan is a regal man, ruling the state, but he needs to be prioritizing the forefather Oghuz’ custom, while on the throne. A Sultan who does not recognize the traditions and customs is not fit to be a Sultan. He is not even a man, or a Bey! Alas, we would not have anything to do with someone who is not a [proper] man. You should know this as a commander of the great Seljuk Sultanate. This is my last word for you. You can leave now.*
> *Karatoygar: We asked you nicely Süleyman Shah, you have two days. If you don’t give them, we know how to come and get them. Don’t go against the Seljuk, or else you know what will happen.*

It is clear that the Turkish warrior nomads hold their tradition above everything else. They would not give away a guest, even if the Sultan commands them. If Sultan does not recognize the custom, he would not be seen as a proper man either.

Meet-Cute

Essentially both pilots, *Resurrection* and *Magnificent Century*, are an extended meet-cute—a scene in which the two people who will form a future romantic couple meet for the first time, typically under unusual, humorous, or "cute" circumstances. Ertuğrul’s

love interest Halime, unlike the lead female character in *Magnificent Century*, Hürrem, is modest and less agentic. Similarly, in this nostalgic heteronormativity, Ertuğrul's masculinity shows as duty, not desire. Here is how they meet:

Ertuğrul goes on a hunt even though there is not much to hunt, during the ongoing famine which has engulfed the *oba*. He says, "what keeps the warrior healthy and in shape is the hunt." His brother Gundogdu reminds him that there are bigger problems that the tribe is facing, and that they have to decide where to move next, as the food is dwindling. Ertuğrul sits on his horse proudly, and says smilingly "You take the toy, brother, the hunt belongs to me." From this quick interaction we understand that Ertuğrul is a keen and proud warrior, who has no interest in power and politics. Ertuğrul gathers his insatiable warrior posse of three, and gallops away as an admiring young woman beams at him.

As Ertuğrul is pursuing a beautiful eyed gazelle, he hears the cries of a girl, and his hunt gets interrupted for a more important cause. The look on gazelle's face and the girl's eyes are identical anyways. Magically and meaningfully, Ertuğrul and the crew arrives from the bushes, at the exact moment the dad had asked for mercy and help from Allah. Here the audience gets treated to an eight-minute fight scene where Ertuğrul smilingly slashes, chops, axes, and swordfights the Christian soldiers, and kills all of them—including the notorious Templar, Titus's little brother, Bisol. Contrary to the dark Christian figures, who sulk, Ertuğrul has a constant mischievous, proud, and handsome smile on his face. He manages to save the girl from an imminent rape and rescues her brother and the *Bey*—her father. The wide-eyed girl keeps looking helpless the whole

scene, even though she was able to kick a horse and kill a man to escape, minutes before Ertuğrul arrived. The genial and belligerent Ertuğrul saves the day.

As Ertuğrul is applying first aid to the wounded father, with instruments such as oak leaves, Bamsi and Dogan—the warrior friends, bring the horses. The girl is being coy, and does not want to leave with Ertuğrul, she is proud and hesitant. Ertuğrul tries to convince her by saying the jackals probably already smelled the blood, and about to come and attack them. Bamsi and Dogan laugh meaningfully, like bunch of high school boys, on the side and say it's easy to defeat a herd of crusaders, but Ertuğrul looks like he is losing against this girl: "It is easy to defeat a crusader brigade, Ertuğrul is done for now," and go on "Well god has mercy on those who are defeated [by love]".

> *Ertuğrul asks "What are you going to do as a lonely and lost woman?"*
> *She answers, "Well, I said I won't come. Tell me your name, we owe you one, and we will pay it."*

Ertuğrul replies "I am Ertuğrul from Kayi tribe" and agrees to let her go: "As you wish, May Allah help you" and for the first time we see him stern and not smiling. As he is leaving, the dad moans, and the brother tells the girl he wants to go with them, so she finally asks: is your *oba* too far?

Even though the circumstances that Ertuğrul and Halime meet would not necessarily count as "cute," it is for sure unusual. In this scene, Halime almost gets raped by Christian soldiers, but thanks to the proud warrior Ertuğrul, she escapes this scenario. Unlike the lead female character in *Magnificent Century*, Hürrem, who we met in Chapter 3, Halime is presented as shy, and less loud. Ertuğrul, is similar, he does not have an overt sexual appetite like Sultan Süleyman, Ertuğrul saves the girl as part of duty, and it's his friends, not him, who make the observation that he might be falling for

this girl. As you might recall, Hürrem made Süleyman notice her by screaming "Sülüman" inappropriately, and then fainting on his lap. Halime is not agentic that way. As we will see in the next section, she is not even cognizant of her own beauty.

Ertuğrul's "women"

Ertuğrul's "women" are clearly divided by the roles they have, the sweetheart, and the mother. The love interest, Halime, is an unassuming, shy woman, who is potentially a hidden princess. Ertuğrul is her savior. Halime is not aware of her assets as a woman, such as her beauty. Unlike Hürrem, she does not speak when not asked, and does not show power or agency without permission. As you remember, she was fighting the Christian soldiers, but when Ertuğrul arrived she switched to a helpless spectator role. The mother, on the other hand, is the source of wisdom, a wonderful translator of traditional authority and customs, and a powerful figure who always has Ertuğrul's back. Ertuğrul in turn, has immense respect for her. We can read gender roles as an extension on the popular-cultural take on traditional authority and honor. Women gain respect as they age, and when they don't have the status granted by age, they should be silent, modest and meek. They serve as rocks in these warrior men's lives and are supposed to advise with shrewd knowledge and emanate patience, as these warrior-men gallop away, fight, or save the *oba* from famine. The following scenes highlight the subdued budding love between Ertuğrul and Halime, and the mindful wisdom of the mother.

At one scene, Ertuğrul goes to the healer's tent to console Halime. It's the very first night he brings her to the *oba*. Smilingly and proud he tells her to go to her tent to rest up, and that he will wait by her father during the night. Halime agrees to go to sleep,

and we see her in bed, rehashing the day, thinking about all the brave scenes featuring Ertuğrul, how he saved them, and how their hands almost touched. Even though she is enamored by him, in her demeanor she is very modest, usually looks down, and acts shy and respectful. Their interaction is very subdued.

After that rough and adventurous day, in the morning, Halime dresses in fresh clothes with the help of Aykız, who is Bamsı's sweetheart, and the Ironsmith's daughter. They seem to have bonded really well, as two well-behaved girls. After all, Aykız is Ertuğrul's fellow warrior's sweetheart. She can't be bad; they are good girls. Aykız gives her a headpiece, which she helps her attach, loves the way she looks and tells her that she looks like as if she were from the palace. Halime winces, and Aykız asks if she said something wrong, she says no, but we get that she might be from a palace. Halime asks Aykız:

> *Halime: Aykız, isn't it difficult to be the sweetheart of an Alp—a warrior like him?*
> *Aykız: Well, knowing that his heart beats for me every single second makes it easy. The only thing I want for him to make it back safe and sound from a battle. Do you have a sweetheart?*
> *Halime: No there is nobody in my life, after my mom passed away all I did is to look after my brother Yigit and keep company to my dad. Also, which man would want a girl like…? (indicating that she is not worthy or beautiful to be loved.)*
> *Aykız: Don't be silly, guys would fight for you and move mountains for you. When was the last time you looked yourself in the mirror? Gives her a dagger, so she can see her beautiful reflection.*

Halime, unlike Hürrem has not been in love before. She does not even think she is worthy of love. We understand from her questions that she might be now thinking about a warrior herself though. And that she might be the worrying kind.

Outside the tent Ertuğrul and Halime meet again. Ertuğrul beams at her the minute he sees her and can't take his eyes from her as she is in clean clothes, well-rested,

and with tidy hair. Halime tells how they were prisoners of Templars, a cult fighting for Jerusalem, who are very strong and cruel. Ertuğrul asks why this really strong cult has interest in them.

> *Ertuğrul: Are you that important? Do you have an issue with Seljuks Halime?*
> *Halime answers: what would the glorious Seljuks have to do with us, lay folk?*
> *Then they go in the tent to visit the father.*

Ertuğrul's mom sees Ertuğrul and the daughter coming out from the healer's tent, as they were visiting Halime's dad. Ertuğrul looks concerned and embarrassed, as he respects his mom immensely. Halime acts modestly, her hands clenched in front of her lap, looking down, taking her gaze away as she talks. Mom says, Halime and his family are welcome at their *oba*, and she should ask for anything they need, girl replies "Allah bless you Hayme Ana."

Halime is very considerate and has Ertuğrul's back. She does not want to be a burden and is okay with her needs not being at the center. Halime walks by and stops to talk to Ertuğrul: She asks "Ertuğrul *Bey*, do you have time?"

> *Halime: I heard Karatoygar came, and he demanded us.*
> *Ertuğrul: Yes, he did.*
> *Halime: Don't put your tribe in danger for us. We will find a way, take care of ourselves. My dad is getting better; we will set on the road in no time.*
> *Ertuğrul: Even if the whole world was against us, we would not deliver you to those tyrants.*

She looks at him with tears in her eyes, and then looks down modestly and says, "If you get in a fight with Karatoygar, there will be consequences." Ertuğrul goes: Don't worry, us Kayis know how to deal with hardships. She looks at him again, with meaningful teary eyes with a faint smile and lowers her eyes again, and walks away. Kayis are resilient, and Halime is a considerate girl who does not want to be a burden.

The following night scene under the stars offers a glimpse of the powerful mother-son relationship. Hayme Hatun is a figure who would have Ertuğrul's back at whatever cost, and conveyor of wisdom:

> *Hayme Hatun steps out, sees Ertuğrul awake under the starts and asks "what's going on Ertuğrul? He goes on to say how he can't sleep".*
>
> *Hayme Hatun: Sit down. What are you dwelling on?*
> *Ertuğrul: Mother, I fell into a fire, and I fell really badly, into the middle of it. Not only I am in the fire, but I threw the entire tribe into it with me.*
> *Hayme Hatun: Well you had no idea that you were getting yourself into this. That you would be facing those infidel bandits, or that so called commander allied with the Crusaders? Or, could you have just ignored, turned your back to the cries of that Gazelle eyed beauty?*
> *Ertuğrul: How could I mother?*
> *Hayme Hatun: You could not, you would not my son, you could not. You could not have known that it would have come to this when you went hunting, neither that you would be throwing the whole tribe into fire with yourself. You threw us in. Yes, you did. Well, though, there is the kind of fire that burns dough into ashes, and there is the kind of fire that makes bread out of dough. It's "him" who showed you the place to fall into the fire. You don't have the right to protest his decision, neither does the tribe. This is a test from Cenab-I Allah from us. In this test you can turn to ashes, or be cooked into a nice loaf of bread. So, don't listen to those worries in you, and don't listen to the presumptuous people in this tribe. Become a protector of our customs and stand strong behind your father's decisions.*

Ertuğrul, satisfied with this lecture says "May Allah never take you or my father away from leading us Ana." Hayme Hatun replies, "May Allah protect you, son, take that water and bring it to your father." And, she sighs. Ertuğrul enters his father's tent. This scene teaches us folk wisdom. Things are not always as they seem, and if they seem hard and negative, they are probably Allah's test on us. As long as Ertuğrul listens to the customs and stands by the oppressed, things will turn out okay. After all, fire might make a nice loaf of bread, or burn things down. If you know how to endure it and serve as the protector of the oppressed, you shall reap the benefits in ways that might not be obvious to you at the given moment.

Projects of nationhood come with specific conceptualizations of "manhood," and "womanhood." (Altınay 2004; Yuval-Davis 1997). Neo-Ottomanism, the strongest contender for hegemonic nationalism in Turkey, promotes a new gender paradigm. Women's behavior, core sensibilities, and proper place weigh heavily in this conceptualization. Yuval Davis (1997) argues that as a response to various modernization projects around the world, groups who were at the social margins came up with alternative fundamentalist constructions of nationhood as they gradually became contenders for hegemony. These groups, among which we can count the neo-Ottomanist AKP, envisioned and imposed an "alternative fundamentalist construction of the true cultural essence of the collectivity." In these new alternative projects women occupy the role of the "carriers of tradition," rather than being symbols of change. Instead, they are constructed as "the cultural symbols of the collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity's honor and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture." (Yuval-Davis 1997) Accordingly, both Halime and Hayme Hatun in *Resurrection Ertuğrul* are coded as modest carriers of tradition. Unlike Ertuğrul and other men who are ought to change the world—flaunting their agency on horseback—and unlike Hürrem, who had the guts to throw herself in the Sultan's arms—the women in *Resurrection* show an agency bound to *oba*, the pastoral land, visible in their patience, hard-work in weaving and cooking, and in their unassuming pure beauty. Even though they display a melancholic beauty, they are not aware of it—it is passive. Men act on the world, where women are coded as culture and the bearer of pastoral tradition.

In Resurrection Ertuğrul, the *oba*-bound pastoral women donned in ethnic clothing, coupled with their wise and patient demeanor remind one the depictions of

land—in this case *oba*—as woman, which Kolodny (1975) labels the "pastoral impulse". These nurturing, receptive, and gratifying women are like the soil, nurturing the seed that the agentic men provide and giving birth to life. Carol Delaney (1991) argues that this "pastoral impulse", which likens women to fertile soil and nature, "glorify the receptivity of women, but deprive her from creativity." Neo-Ottomanism, disturbed by agentic palace women who fought for power once again relegates the place of women to a passive carrier of tradition, bound to an eternal pastoral.

Ertuğrul, the lonely hero:

Like Erdogan who fights against the West at the expense of being perceived as not looking after his own interests, Ertuğrul is a lonely hero who seeks justice and follows customs even if that's the hardest route. These two scenes show him as a lonely warrior who is trying to figure out what he should gird his sword for, what the meaning of life is.

> *Gundogdu: Ertuğrul, you caused all this trouble.*
> *Ertuğrul: Don't push me brother!*
> *Gundogdu: When will you ever stop being a stubborn brat? You don't care for anyone. Not your father, not your tribe.*
> *Ertuğrul: What would you have done? What would you have done? Would you have turned back and left? The Gundogdu I know is not a man like that. The Gundogdu I know would not step over mercy or justice.*
> *Gundogdu is circling Ertuğrul on horseback as he is yelling:*
> *What mercy, what justice? Look at this oba, everything is cracking up. Hunger is everywhere, winter is coming and we don't know where to go. The animals are starving to death. Oh Justice, oh Mercy, [indicating these are useless terms] wake up, open your eyes. Look what you are doing when life and death matters for the oba are discussed.*
> *Ertuğrul is squeezing his jaw as his brother is fuming.*
> *Gundogdu: How will this oba survive Ertuğrul? How?*

We cut to a sunset scene. Ertuğrul, leaning on a tree, is carving wood with his knife, looks in the distance with thoughtful eyes, and pours his heart to his horse:

> *Aktolgalı, this huge world was left to no one, and we are no exceptions, it will not be left to us either. Aktolgali, why would a man keep living in this world of lies? Why should he rise? What should he gird his sword for? Ertuğrul gets sentimental and existential. Why should we have a home? Why do you need a state, customs and tradition, a homeland? The oppressor will make the sky fall on us if we don't hand him the prisoners. Wouldn't the sky fall on us if we hand him the prisoners? But if we don't hand them in my father will be in trouble. What should I do Aktolgali? For a world over whose slightest breath we can't reign, where we can't control even the slightest bit, are we going to bend down and bow? Are we going to submit to the oppressor? Isn't that when the customs fail, fall silent? Won't our fire burn out then? Won't our pit die out then? Won't our oba go extinct, then? Right Aktolgalı?*

Ertuğrul seems truly to be his father's son. He respects the customs and will not side with the oppressor even if he makes the sky fall on them. Recall Erdogan's speech at the Conquest Rally. He is another man who stands against the oppressors even though it is costly at times, and he promises to be on the side of the oppressed Muslim countries, because that's what true heroes do. Things which don't seem logical at first glance, like going against the rule of law, and not hand in prisoners to "law enforcement" make sense when one starts seeing it from the hero's perspective. What is state, or customs if they require to side with hidden oppressors? The idea that there are things in this world that the lay people would not grasp, because they don't know everything behind the scenes, comes through this scene. And, who does not want to side with a lonely warrior man, who is bullied by his brother, who talks to his horse friend?

Power is given, not taken

While Ertuğrul chooses the high road, and risks being burned in fire, impatient and power-hungry people from inside the *oba* have other plans. Kurdoglu is talking to Gundogdu, and they are conspiring behind the *Bey*'s and Ertuğrul's back, it's a scene where the big brother falls for a scheme from inside the *oba*:

Kurdoglu: Karatoygar is a big tyrant, he would do everything in his power. You have very well thought of a great solution Gundogdu. Not only you showed everyone your intelligence, but also who will be the next Bey when the time comes. But first, we need to get rid of the big trouble of Karatoygar.
Gundogdu: When my father says "customs," he will not back down.
Kurdoglu: Ertuğrul, look at the stuff you have brought on us.
Gundogdu: We need to convince my father. If we convince him, Ertuğrul would back down.
Kurdoglu: You speak as if you don't know your father. If the sky fell down, he would not give the prisoners back.
Gundogdu: What will we do then?
Kurdoglu: Your father said he is going to send me as a messenger to Karatoygar, whatever is required, I will do.

Following this incident Kurdoglu brings gifts to Karatoygar, lies behind *Bey*'s back, and schemes with Karatoygar, at the expense of giving away Ertuğrul. Karatoygar asks: If you aim to cooperate, tell me who did this? Was it Süleyman Shah? Kurdoglu, with ominous music says; Süleyman Shah's son, Ertuğrul. Through this incident the audience understands that Kurdoglu is a traitor and schemer, and not loyal neither to *Bey* nor Ertuğrul. But hunger to power does not really lead to ascend to power. Divine rule has something else in store, revealed through dreams:

Süleyman Shah has a dream, which he recounts to *oba's* scholar/sorcerer Ilyas Fakir, saying he does not know how to interpret it, yet that he has been restless with worry since the previous night. In this dream Ertuğrul shoots an arrow to his father. Ilyas Fakir reveals that this dream carries two messages. First one is that "hard times await us". The second is, there is a spiritual order about who the messenger to Aleppo should be. Ertuğrul.

Following this dream, the *Bey* declares that Ertuğrul will be the messenger, which the brother Gundogdu, does not take very well. Ertuğrul is surprised, as he was not expecting this outcome.

Süleyman Shah asks Ertuğrul sternly: Do you think it's your brother's right to be the messenger?
Ertuğrul answers: Yes. Why not my brother but me?
Süleyman Shah: Because he started to worship the flame of power, and it has captured its soul. So I put out the flame…The future of Kayı is on your shoulders. Your failure will be our calamity. For the land El Aziz is going to give us, we shall accept any price. But not a single Oghuz is a sacrificial lamb. Don't ever forget. As much as you need a home near Aleppo, Ameer of Aleppo needs Kayı's warriors. Do not ever bow your head down. Show them that you are a real Oghuz. Show them you are an Oghuz who knows what he wants, and is ready to make a just deal to get what he wants. May Allah help you!
Ertuğrul: I will fulfill my duty even if it costs me my life dad. I shall be back without disappointing you.

This interaction reminds the audience that the descendants of Oghuz are proud even when they are asking for help. They also don't ask for charity; they will be paying back for the land they receive in soldiers. Ertuğrul learns another lesson, this time from his father. Power does not come to those who yearn too hard for it, it comes to those who follow the customs, and don't seek power for power's sake.

Ertuğrul sets up on his adventures

The founding first episode of Resurrection Ertuğrul ends with Ertuğrul setting up for the hero's adventure. With the love of the gazelle eyed beauty, there is nothing he can't conquer:

Halime: Are you prepared?
Ertuğrul: We alps, warriors are ready for everything.
Halime: Right, everything comes easy when you are used to it.
Ertuğrul: Sometimes it gets harder when you are used to it. [indicating poetically that he got used to her presence.]
[She pets the horse and slips something into his bag.]
Halime: May you have a good journey. May the sun not burn you. May the wind not make you cold. May your feet don't touch a stone. May you go like water, and come back like water to your oba.
Ertuğrul: I will bring the message as fast as a bird, and come back in no time.
Halime: Your mother and father would be pleased with that. [She is so shy and modest; can't even say she would be pleased.]

> *Ertuğrul asks, what about you?*
> *Halime: [Surprised.] Me? I will be long gone by then.*
> *Ertuğrul: You cannot go, before I come back… Well, your father won't be ready [scared of overstepping, and pushing.].*
> *Halime: Have a good journey Ertuğrul Bey.*
> *Ertuğrul: Who knows maybe…*

Ertuğrul leaves the *oba* with well wishes from his parents. His brother meaningfully chops wood angrily, and does not say farewell, or gives him his blessings. He and Halime look at each other and lock eyes as Ertuğrul's horse ambles away. We hear their magically synchronized inner monologues:

> *Halime looks at him: Well you may leave and never come back, well you may leave and we may never meet again.*
> *Ertuğrul in his head: I will ride my horse without hesitation to see you again.*
> *Halime replies: May you have a wide open road at your feet Ertuğrul.*
> *He does not take her eyes of her, and ignores the other girl who is in love with him.*

As Ertuğrul goes on his journey, we watch that spies, and ominous men on horses constantly follow him. But Ertuğrul finds the girls modest craft, a sword ornament, that she has secretly slipped in his bag. He sees her beautiful face reflected in lake water as he rests and runs into a Muslim thinker and mystic Ibn Arabi on the road. We know that, after all, the fire he is burning in, might lead to a good outcome.

What do people take away from it?

My informants are wonderful in articulating how *Resurrection Ertuğrul* is different than the *Magnificent Century*, why they love watching the series, and how an award ceremony scandal indicates where Erdogan stood vis-à-vis the series, and took it as an opportunity for emotional governance. They emphasize how who they are is a major factor in their choice, the religious and nationalistic fulfillment they get from the series, and how

Resurrection Ertuğrul provides them a more authentic outlook on history. What's more is that according to my informants the series also shed light on the current politics in Turkey, that it brings them goosebumps to see parallels between the treacherous people who partake in the 2016 coup attempt, and the people who engage in deceitful behavior in the historical drama. First, I will discuss the diehards' interpretation of the show. Second, I will talk about the award scandal, and lastly, taking the cue from my interviewees, I will provide a comparison between *Magnificent Century* and the *Resurrection Ertuğrul.*

The Diehards:

In the following excerpt, Meryem, a forty-four-year-old tailor from Istanbul, tells how the series brings her back to the days of Prophet Mohammed by providing mysticism, and showing men whose heart-eyes are open. As she meets similar people in her Koran course, series weave the mysticism she encounters in her Koran reading group back in her living room, where she spends her evenings with her spouse.

> Me: What shows do you watch?
> Meryem: Well, for sure I watch Ertuğrul.
> Me: Okay, the Resurrection Ertuğrul
> Meryem: Yes, It's my favorite. My spouse and I are fixated on it.
> Me: Why?
> Meryem: Well, hmm, why do I like it? Well there is a lot of history in it. And in the past Ottomans are very powerful, that really moves me. Well, Allah has given them this wisdom and mystery. Well, of course from our perspective, there is also the factor of… Umm, well we grew up like that. We are Allah-fearing people, we learned to fear Allah. Our mom and dad taught this to us. I have a feeling there is some of that in there. This is why Ertuğrul moves me so much. There is for example this scene in a cave… That scene excited me a lot. That cave scene brought me back to the times of our Prophet Mohammed.
> Me: What was it about?

Meryem: They were escaping from something and they got stuck in a cave, and somebody prayed and did some mysterious stuff and a smoke covered the cave and that stopped the bad guys from finding them.
Me: So, the smoke prevented the bad guys from discovering their hideout?
Meryem: Yes, yes but it was so beautiful. Well, it moved me so much I still get goosebumps… When for example when they poison Ertuğrul, they pray for him, and he survives. These are old wise man, whose "heart-eyes" are open. Well, I attend a lot of Koran courses, I am knowledgeable because of that. We, in our [contemporary] times, have these people too, these wise men appear every hundred years. Their heart-eyes are open, they see a lot more than we do, they feel us. Because I believe in such things, these shows affect me a lot. The Throne is similar, that's Ottoman too, but not the mystic stuff.
Me: Hmm, you think the Throne is different.
Meryem: Yes, there is honesty in Resurrection. The authenticity in the past… Do we have any of that today? No, we don't. Your friend stabs you from the back. I think this show tells us the honesty and genuineness in the past. I don't know. I am really fond of it. We don't miss the show ever. We love it. Sometimes, there is a power outage, we go someplace else and watch it there.
Me: Do you watch the Magnificent? It still continues.
Meryem: Yeah, we watched that one a lot, but I think that one was missing stuff.
Me: Like what?
Meryem: I don't believe that the Ottoman Empire was like that. That the Sultan had many wives, or that the Ottomans had prisoners. We know people had to be wedded. That series showed otherwise. I think it wasn't that accurate.
Me: So they did not show the Ottoman past as it is?
Meryem: Well, of course not. They executed people who don't pray back then. Those people fought in the name of Allah. I don't think they were engaging in such stuff out of wedlock.

Meryem thinks, unlike *Magnificent Century, Resurrection Ertuğrul* shows the authentic Ottoman Empire, which dictated that people who don't pray would be executed. Feride, an informant from Istanbul, told me in her TV room how she inoculates her love of historical drama to her neighbors, and how she sees parallels with the contemporary world, and the past shown in the series. Like I have hinted in the previous section she approves that Ertuğrul was a lonely hero who did things his way. The way museum visitors talked about misery in the past, she saw misery in the flatlands and was inspired by the perseverance.

Me: do you watch TV?

Feride: I do. I love documentaries. We love the historical drama. With my spouse, we never miss. We get glued to the TV. We also try to pass on our passion to our guests. It is really important to know your past. It is really important to live with your past. That's why we love this stuff.
Feride: We love Ertuğrul, it is one of our favorites. Then there is the Magnificent. Now we have the Throne. We are trying not to miss any.
Me: So, you watched the first episode.
Feride: Yes.
Me: Did you like it?
Feride: Yes, I loved it.
Me: Which part?
Feride: It just started, but, it's as if what we are going through now existed back then! Well you know the July 15 Coup. You know, it's as if this stuff existed back then, to be harmed by the ones who you think are your right hand.
Me: You said you also watch the *Magnificent Century*. Why? Can you talk about what you do and do not like about it?
Feride: Hmm. Well what parts do I not like? The Sultan building a harem, this is against my values. Him spending time with whomever he likes. I am against this. But, fighting for his country, uniting the country, collecting the taxes, fighting against banditry. I also love that that the Sultan mingles with lay people in disguise to punish them. I like this. There is still people today who don't pay taxes, or who engage in extortion. I like that the Sultan tried to uncover all that.
Me: What about Ertuğrul?
Feride: I love Ertuğrul's perseverance. I love that he never gives up, that he follows his own path even if he is going against his brother or father. He tries to save his country along with his own truth and principles. He walks his own path. That's what we love the most.
Me: Do you notice any differences between these series?
Feride: Well of course. There are a ton of differences. In Magnificent Century, they live in the palace, that's not the case in Ertuğrul. They are hungry, they live on the flatlands. No bedding, no food. There is misery and hunger.

Murat from Trabzon point to his circles, and how he thinks AKP supporters follow and approve of the series as they also think they are in a period of resurrection, a revival. Murat also thinks that the past shown on Resurrection Ertuğrul is an authentic one, as it is not set in the palace, but enacted through war scenes. It makes you really "feel" history.

Me: Why do you like Resurrection?
Murat: Compared to other series in Turkey, the content is way better, especially when compared to historical series. And it tells the story of the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. The actors are great. I like it. I like watching it.

> Me: So you said "compared to other historical drama." Can you say a little bit more on that? Where do you situate it compared to the Throne or the Magnificent Century?
> Murat: Well, I have seen most of those. I watched Magnificent Century quite a bit too. Not as much as this one, but some. Well, that one told the story in the palace, and that stuff does not attract me that much, so I did not follow it as intensely. It was all about the Harem Intrigue. Resurrection is different. It really tells how the Ottoman Empire was founded, what Ertuğrul Gazi went through. There is a lot more war scenes. Well, for that reason, I think it is totally different. You feel that history there. All the costumes and everything it makes you feel the history. The other one is just set in the palace.
> Me: What about the people around you in Trabzon? Your family, or your friend circle? How do people react to Resurrection Ertuğrul?
> Murat: Not in my family circle, but because of my job I meet a lot of people every day, I visit a lot of customers and somehow we end up talking about these matters. I am pretty sure eighty percent of the followers think that we as a country now in a period of revival, resurrection. Especially the people who are close to the AKP regime feel like they are now in a period of resurrection, and they are now again one more time in love with the Ottoman Empire.

Cem, a thirty-eight-year-old construction worker from Istanbul, is even more open an adamant about how his background is crucial in determining why he loves his history; he is a nationalistic guy. He likes history, and also researches his own ancestry. He pointed to a very important fact about how till now Turks have watched American heroism distributed by cultural imperialism of Hollywood. These new history shows now offer an escape from that, and for the first time show professionally "our own heroism". When watching these shows he feels the way he feels when his sports team wins.

> Cem: Well, I have been watching every episode since these series have started. TRT's series are in general very good quality, and like I said before I am a guy who is very nationalistic.
> Me: Yeah, okay, so why Resurrection Ertuğrul? What does it make you feel?
> Cem: Do you support a sports team?
> Me: Yes.
> Cem: The week your team wins you don't personally win anything but you get a pleasure out of that. That feeling is very similar to this, trust me, it is the same. Meaning, you become happy. You want to see all the heroism from back then. To this day we have seen the heroism of Americans on TV. We now want something of our own. We had some series in the past, like the Cuneyt Arkin ones, but

> nothing this professional. They weren't as great. But these new ones, they suck you in. You feel like you live this history, it's that professional.
> Me: And this has an effect on you?
> Cem: Yes, it does. Like I said, I am a guy who is in love with his history. I am enamored by my history.
> Me: What else do you do? Do you read historical stuff?
> Cem: I have always loved history. I like researching the past. Not just the history of countries but I also love researching my family lineage. It's said we came from Dagistan to Karaman, and from there to Ordu…. Then goes on to give a detailed family history.

Sevihan, an aunt with a heavy Black Sea accent told me that she is a descendent of Kayi tribe, and that she begrudgingly watched Magnificent Century. Unlike the *Magnificent Century* where shenanigans were the theme, and nobody covered themselves properly, *Resurrection Ertuğrul* shows how "we are Muslims," and how we came to Anatolia.

> Sevihan: Ertuğrul is our history. We descended from the Kayis. And this series tell that story from that beginning. How we became Muslims, how we conquered Anatolia, it shows all that. We love it because it is our history. Ertuğrul marches into everything in the name of Allah, that's why we love him.
> Did you watch Magnificent Century?
> Yes, but angrily, not out of love, but to see what kind of shenanigans are going to be depicted. Well, Halime covers herself, they cover themselves in appropriate clothing. The beads and stuff, it looks timely. In Magnificent Century, it was different the clothes, and that woman had Süleyman in her fingers with all sorts of shenanigans. She did all kinds of bad stuff. She did not do the right things.

Kemal, the Gandalf fan from Kayseri pointed to two very visible Ottoman seals in his office while telling me how he is a nationalist conservative person. He recognized that even if we are not sure what exactly happened back then he takes a pleasure of seeing how injustice is punished with executions:

> Kemal: Why do I watch Resurrection Ertuğrul? Well, like I said, by nature I am a nationalist conservative guy. Like you see I have an Ottoman seal in my office, or there is the signature of Süleyman the Lawgiver behind your back. As I am who I am, Resurrection has the kind of influence on me.
> Well, the thing is, there isn't much written on Ertuğrul Gazi period. They probably write the script based on whatever they can find…. The other day Ertuğrul Gazi chopped Ural *Bey*'s head off. Is there a guy like that in history?

> Yes, there is. Has he really chopped his head off? I don't know. We know they had a disagreement. That's what we know, and the script writers make a story out of it… And, you take a pleasure out of that killing.

Ismail, a twenty-eight-year-old flight attendant from Istanbul, supported these series because he thinks these shows help remembering both heroism and treason on a day to day basis.

> Ismail: I think the more these type of series which depict our ancestors the better. Because, then we won't forget it. The good and the bad remains unforgotten in our everyday lives. Because they indeed show both the heroism and treason, disloyalty and betrayal. I don't know how accurate, but at least they show this stuff actively to the audience. I like it because of that.

Lastly, Melike from Istanbul thinks people get a certain satisfaction from watching the series, by feeling that they are winning against the enemy. She underlines that people equate president Erdogan with the lead actors depicted in these historical dramas.

> Melike: My neighbor loves it, especially her husband, he constantly shares stuff on Facebook, quotes from Ertuğrul, videos and stuff… Well, the society feels happy with these stuff, the quotes, the demeanors, the reaction. They feel like they are doing this against the enemy. People equate Ertuğrul and Abdülhamid with Erdogan and whatnot.

The Award Scandal

In 2016 Resurrection Ertuğrul received an award at the Altın Kelebek Awards, the equivalent of American Emmys. While presenting, the host, Okan Bayulgen said that he has not seen the show, but that from now on he will be watching it all day every day, and that he will host screenings. Mockingly. This caused a scandal where the President Erdogan intervened by reprimanding Bayulgen and essentially asking him "Who are you to say that?" My two respondents, both History Guardians talked about this event and indicated how this kind of enforcement distances them even further from this show:

> Yavuz: Look, I never watched Resurrection. And I have an antipathy for it. Well it's sort of forced on us. Even the channels now have sides and stuff. One side says, don't watch it, one side pressures you to watch it. They declare you a traitor of the nation if you don't. These things happen, we see it on TV. We all use social media.
> M: Those who don't watch are traitors?
> Yavuz: Well yeah… there is the whole award thing, Okan Bayulgen [the host of the awards ceremony and a well-known comic] mocked the series. And then, even the president got involved saying: Who do you recognize if you don't recognize Ertuğrul and stuff? So, I don't like this kind of thing. Does that make sense? … I don't have to watch Resurrection Ertuğrul, but I respect who watches it. Well, these things create an antipathy, that's what I am trying to say. Even if I want to watch it, I don't watch it because of my political view. Maybe I miss out because of that, but I don't care.

Yavuz indicates that he might be missing out, but that he will not be coerced to watching it. Ayse, a forty-five-year-old unemployed-turned-homemaker from Istanbul, similarly does not watch the show, but has seen how Erdogan reacted to the joke at the event. This shows that even if you don't watch the show you can't escape from some of the teachings, and that you might be made feel bad by the President Erdogan himself.

> Me: Well, now there is the Resurrection Ertuğrul. Have you watched it, or have you come across it?
> Ayse: I saw the advertisement on TV. I have not watched it. It got an award and what not. I paid attention to that though. Okan Bayulgen really mocked it. I think that is the one.
> Me: I heard of that too. What happened?
> Ayse: Well, it was a huge thing. Okan got a lot of push-back. But he really mocked them badly.
> Me: What did he say?
> Ayse: Well he said, he will watch it, with all kind of meaningful gestures and stuff. He is on the mike, the whole auditorium is full of people and he is making faces, he spoke with irony and ridicule.
> Me: So he implied he does not watch it.
> Ayse: Laughs and smirks and says, yeah and yeah that he would watch it... And I like Okan you know, but he was a bit harsh hahah.

Erdogan likes the show and indicated his approval by visiting the set. Yet, he is not a fan of the show which started the Ottoman period drama craze. As you remember he had

uttered how he does not recognize the Sultan Süleyman depicted on this show. The next section is the comparison of the two shows offered by my informants.

Magnificent versus Resurrection

Here, in people's reactions, especially the gender aspect comes to fore. People equate the harem depicted in Magnificent Century with women, and feminine intrigue. Ibrahim, a thirty-three-year-old liquor store owner from Istanbul, thinks his star sign makes him more commanding, and causes him to like the belligerent Ertuğrul more. He also thinks the show is not that great in depicting gender relations of that era, as he does not believe people were overtly intimate in the past.

> Ibrahim: I like Resurrection Ertuğrul more.
> Interviewer: Why?
> Ibrahim: Well, because, umm, Magnificent Century is more about love and stuff, but I think Resurrection Ertuğrul is much closer to our history…. Well, for example the emperor, well the character of the Sultan is much more appealing there.
> M: Why is that? Can you tell a bit more?
> Ibrahim: Well he is much more commanding. I am also like that, because of my star sign. Well, Aquarius is very commanding too, it is the leader type.
> M: Do you think the life in Ottoman Empire was similar to what's on TV?
> Ibrahim: I don't think so. I think they are embellishing it a little bit… I don't think people were that warm and close in their relationships. I think it was way more disciplined. Here the interactions are warmer and intimate. I don't think things were that intimate. Well, in our past, the way a man and a woman talks and stuff. I don't think things were so intimate back then.

Vedat tells how his dad loves Resurrection, and his mom watched Magnificent Century, well, "because women like that kind of stuff."

> Me: do you watch Resurrection Ertuğrul?
> Vedat: I don't watch it. My dad watches it. He likes it a lot. I live apart from them, but I see it when I visit them. He is a huge fan...
> My dad likes these sorts of series. There was this movie Conquest 1453, a Turkish movie. He probably watched that movie twenty times back to back. The man loves that sort of thing.

> Me: Okay, so you are not a huge fan of these series but your dad is. Does he like Magnificent Century?
> Vedat: No, he likes the Resurrection. He does not like the Magnificent. Magnificent was my mom's favorite. Well, women like this stuff of course. Of course, there is the harem, the Sultan, the concubines, Hurrem and Valide Sultan. Their whimsical stuff and the power play, all of it.
> Me: I see. So your mom likes that one, and your dad the other.
> My dad likes these sorts of series. There was this movie Conquest 1453, a Turkish movie. He probably watched that movie twenty times back to back. The man loves that sort of thing.

Yunus, the smart history student, has important observations about how *Resurrection* is significantly more political than *Magnificent Century*. For example, he thinks *Resurrection* is a great propaganda tool that motivates people. When international politics do not seem to be going well, people escape into the winning world of the Kayi tribe and release themselves in that atmosphere.

> Me: Yeah so the music is effective too?
> Yunus: Well, I can say this. I think the best propaganda that AKP regime came up with has been the Resurrection. And, please record this, I vote for AKP. But, they are a little over the top.
> Me: So, this series aired years after the Magnificent Century. Do you think there was any influence?
> Yunus: They got some ideas maybe but Magnificent Century was not political at all.
> Me: It wasn't?
> Yunus: Maybe Orientalist, [but not political.]
> I think history is a motivational tool, not even a tool of influence, but a motivator. Something to boost up! Something to gloss over mistakes in foreign policy. Well, say for example, there was an issue with Holland in foreign policy, some guy from Holland appears in Resurrection, and someone slaps him, this relieves people. There is this peculiar quality to these series.

Nergis, who liked Ertuğrul better because he is just, and he does not lock women in a harem:

> Nergis: Well, In Magnificent Century the whole thing is about locking concubines up in harem and stuff. You know the deal, that's how things unfold. I feel like Resurrection Ertuğrul is better.
> Me: Which character would you prefer?
> Nergis: I think Ertuğrul because he sides with justice, he is just.

I want to close with a telling quote from Ayse, a history Guardian, who was a fan of the *Magnificent Century* when it first aired. My research design proved very fruitful as I went back to some of my 2012 informants in 2017 and captured this shift. I asked Ayse "You used to watch MC. Do you still watch it?" Ayse went on to say:

> Ayse: No I don't. It is not appealing any more.
> Me: Why do you think that? Any reasons?
> Ayse: Maybe we reached a certain satisfaction now. Oh my god. I used to follow it like crazy.
> Me: Yeah, I just read our conversation from then. You had said your friends watched it too. You guys were staunch followers.
> Ayse: Yeah, they did. I mean I used to, but now I don't know. And you know, now they are just so insisting on this Ottoman thing. Away with the Republic, let's establish the Ottoman Empire. I don't know, this created a certain antipathy about anything Ottoman in me. I mean I think we are satiated, satisfied with all this now
> Me: Yeah.
> Ayse: I mean Ottoman, Ottoman, Ottoman… They are imposing it on us. It is gone. It is collapsed, it is in ruins. You can't bring back that period. They are blowing this Ottoman whistle just to oppose Ataturk. No. And this makes me cold towards those series. I just associate this series with this kind of worldview. That palaces, the grandeur, that attire, I only associate with this worldview now.

Here, Ayse, a history guardian, now started to associate *Magnificent Century* with neo-Ottomanism. Neo-Ottomanism has coopted Ottomania. And what's more, this informant is really into nostalgia, but as soon as this form gets coopted by the AKP she wants to distance herself from it. This is where nostalgia and populist nostalgia come apart. Ayse, who is into vintage and everything nostalgic, does not go for the populist kind as she is a History guardian. This excerpt shows how successful the AKP has been in coopting the popular cultural iterations of Ottoman nostalgia. Neo-Ottomanism has coopted Ottomania, a potential, light-hearted cosmopolitan engagement with the Ottoman past, and made it "his," by hardening its fluid boundaries into rigid heteronormative, and

overly self-assured categories. This association of Ottoman symbols with AKP's interpretation of the Ottoman past leads a segment of people to distance themselves from their popular cultural pleasures. I argue that AKP's own use of popular culture to their own ends since 2012 has substantively contributed to this perception. The continued popularity of Turkish baths, new state-led TV series, the closing of popular photo booths and debut of state-led ones indicate to me that this is a dynamic, dialectical relationship. Cultural power is very complicated, and the relationship between the more fragmented commercial nostalgia, and this state led populist project is not one which is completely controllable, even by such incredibly cunning political players. The History Guardians remind us that messing with culture won't always do what you want it to do, pointing to the ultimate instability of hegemony. No matter how much resources you put into it, it won't always necessarily do what exactly what you want it to do. Reminding us once again, that culture is a social force on its own.

Conclusion

Magnificent Century begins every episode with a note: "This series has been inspired by history." *Resurrection Ertuğrul* has a seemingly similar, but meaningfully different message: "This series has been inspired by OUR history." As these two statements indicate, the history war in Turkey is being fought over nostalgic TV series. The president watches, comments, and orders series, having realized that he can create a strong hybrid by combining aspects of fun, entertaining and light-hearted Cosmopolitan Nostalgia with the mobilizing, unifying, and collective effervescence inducing Spectacular Nostalgia. With *Resurrection*, the techniques and tropes of Cosmopolitan

Nostalgia get co-opted to create a rigid history that is marked by authoritarian populist binaries of “us,” versus “them,” the “infinitely good,” and the “horribly bad.” Once again, the ownership of a “true” Turkish history is consolidated and forced onto people. Different interpretations, potential contestations, and recognitions of flaws and ambiguities are cut off right where they might spring.

Conclusion

One site I wanted to observe for this project was Giyçek, an "old time photo studio" which specialized in photography in Ottoman costumes. What better venue to work at and immerse myself in joyous and entertaining Ottomania? I thought. Before embarking on my field work I had studied the shop's website, glamorous with beaming faces of upper-middle class Turks, and foreign tourists alike. An enthusiastic visitor had recounted their delightful experience at the studio by saying, "You are free to choose who you want to be, a sultan, a queen, a concubine or maybe a lady from 19th century. We were so into the whole thing we reenacted two eras! 16th century, *Magnificent Century* style and 1850s, featuring fashionable early modern urban ladies and gentlemen." Numerous interviews, and media appearances adorned the website. After a day at the museum, I worked up my courage and changed my usual route back home to stop by the studio to seek access. Disappointment. The doors were closed even though it was still opening hours. I inquired with the shopkeeper across the street, and he said "Yeah, they had a big announcement last week, they moved away." I didn't want to believe it, but took a picture of the contact numbers and went home, calling it a day.

At home, I contacted the number via WhatsApp, and reached the owner. She confirmed that she had closed shop, and moved to Europe—lately a common practice for upper middle class Turks[24]. I chatted with the owner, telling her that I researched Ottoman nostalgia, and would have loved to immerse myself in the studio—and that I

[24] See Andic's work (2020) and on migration aspirations in the Balkans. I observe a similar pattern among young professionals where "getting out of Turkey," is the new yardstick of success.

was disappointed to see the studio gone. She told me she was indeed very upset about the whole situation herself—and that she was hesitant to talk on the subject as she did not want to affiliate Giyçek with "these matters." She said "A lot of people, including the foreign media, made the studio a news subject, affiliating it with 'unrelated' things—things that had nothing to do why I founded Giyçek six years ago." She continued in her WhatsApp message that she never had an inclination for "such matters" in founding the shop or doing her job. As for similar studios around the world, her aim was entertainment and tourism; fun, old-timey clothes, and old-timey photos—nothing more.

I now know that the closure of Giyçek represented another case where the heavy hand of state neo-Ottomanism crushed the jouissance of Ottomania. The owner of the studio, it seemed, fed-up with being part of the world of Ottoman nostalgia closed shop, packed her bags and left Turkey for good. I am sure that her decision to move away involved more than a disenchantment with Ottoman nostalgia. But what seems telling is that while she chose to leave her well-curated apolitical business behind, many AKP-run photo studios started emerging in various museum grounds around Istanbul. Once again the regime managed to dictate who could do what with the Ottoman past. These studios make another juicy bounty where AKP's Spectacular Nostalgia can feed on—and keep being as fascinating and entertaining as Cosmopolitan Nostalgia. Populist politics needs to be entertaining and nostalgia provides the special effects.

My own intellectual journey with Ottoman nostalgia started with the wish to see expression of history in popular culture—where identities can be contested, articulated and reworked. The more I followed Ottoman nostalgia in the popular, the more dead-ends I faced. Just today, the Turkish government ordered an ultimatum to Netflix to take down

a series featuring an LGBTQ character whose name is Osman—the founder of the Ottoman Empire. The president of the "Radio and Television Supreme Council" of Turkey called the series a clear provocation, and warned that they will take the measures to protect the youth from LGBTQ perversion. The more I pursued the fun of Ottomania, the more I bumped into incidents showing the state trying to control every corner of Turkish popular culture. So, conducting my dissertation research in sites of state-led neo-Ottomanism became essential.

I wrote my first two chapters, with their development of my nostalgia heuristic and its application to recent Turkish history, after my fieldwork was concluded. This allowed me to follow the changing relationship between state and popular culture in shaping the Ottoman nostalgic field and its core sensibilities. My readings of historical secondary resources showed the trajectory of nostalgia as a social force—in the world, and in Turkey. When it first started to emerge as a sickness in armies—indicating a deep yearning for home, and a time before mass-conscription, nostalgia was feared by the state as a disrupting force. If soldiers were going to feel sick because they miss their home too much, they would not be able to fight. Then came the state-seeking Romantic Nostalgia of the newly-forming nation states, trying to gain independence from the ancién regimes. Once the states had established their power, they perfected the mechanisms to harness the power of nostalgia in pomp and spectacle. Love for the nation, and love for the fearless and fierce leader got created, synthesized and mobilized in relational mass gatherings. In an ideal case of Spectacular Nostalgia emotions were successfully governed. With a globalized acceleration of consumption, and connection, and proliferation of media a different nostalgia form emerged, ubiquitous in its objects and yearning for a

multicultural past; Cosmopolitan Nostalgia. At this moment in time, once again we are witnessing state trying to control and monopolize this social force.

The third chapter offered a glimpse of what fun, titillating and mind-opening Cosmopolitan Nostalgia could look like. Examining *Magnificent Century,* I explored core sensibilities of Ottomania, such as love and jealousy, and the induction of emotions such as pleasure and embarrassment, while watching harem women and imperial men. Main characters' ambivalent pasts, and ambiguous personalities resulting from conversion from Christianity to Islam posed the greatest threat to neo-Ottomanism's essentialist interpretations of historic personas. Looking at the *embarrassment* uttered by some of the audience, I explored why Oriental self-gaze induced such strong and divided reactions regarding agentic and sexualized women, authenticity and conspicuous luxury. I claimed that frivolous luxury consumption, the constant lingering on a complex past by the converts, and domestic rivalry between palace women, congealed into a private feminized sphere—disturbed the audience because the "Ottoman" has overwhelmingly been coded as a masculine public domain.

Next, we travelled from the living-room TV to the neo-Ottomanist rally, commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople. While interpreting the rally, I analyzed populist techniques at work, which made visible the rally's emotional mechanism, bringing the content, dialogue and emotions between Erdogan, the most important and powerful actor at the rally, and the audience, to the fore (Karakaya 2018). The rally proved neo-Ottomanism is a central resource in creating the binary oppositions on which populism so heavily relies by claiming a continuous and compelling past, which promises to guide contemporary Turkey into its glorious future, with a leader who is posited as a

savior—the true heir of Mehmed the Conqueror (Fatih). In the second half, drawing from forty-five in depth interviews in five cities, I investigated the extent to which this nostalgic performance convinces my informants. Three interpretative perspectives emerged from the participants' response: *Spectacle Seekers* see the rallies as a necessity and as providing emotional uplift as the state's duty; *Appraising Skeptics* approve the commemoration, yet are skeptical of the authenticity of the effort; and *History Guardians* deem the Ottoman past as sacred and regard AKP's use of it as emotional manipulation. The last two clusters, *Appraising Skeptics* and *History Guardians,* underline the tension between a strong hegemonic nostalgia, neo-Ottomanism, and political authoritarianism. As the Ottoman past became further sacralized by the cultural work of AKP, people paradoxically started to question "emotional manipulation" by the regime using this holy past. I argue that populism and Spectacular Nostalgia work well together on a discursive level, yet, this does not mean that this paired discourse appeals to the public or the *audience* homogenously. On the personal level, only some buy into this rhetoric, countering popular assumptions regarding both the sentimentalism of nostalgia and populism's superpowers to use it to sweep the masses along.

At the Panorama Museum I had the strongest ethnographic satisfaction, once again was humbled by the complex life-worlds of both the visitors and the museum employees. Yet while every person I encountered here was molded through their unique life circumstances, their personalities were also a sediment of Turkish history. Here I did the most challenging theoretical heavy-lifting to understand how national emotions come into being in a public setting, and built a theorization of how feelings become meaningful emotions through a cognitive scaffolding. Narrating people's immediate reactions, I

showed how the museum elicits powerful responses. Focusing on visible facial expressions, and bodily movements helped me describe the embodied level of engagement with history. A significant group of visitors emphasized how they would not be able to explain how the museum affects them, specifically in that they are *moved beyond words*. When they *could* verbalize, they acknowledged the suffering of the people of the past, and the need to be worthy of these long-gone people's sacrifice which have made their own Istanbul lives possible. They mourned Istanbul and its long-gone prosperity and glory and try to make sense of a Turkey ridden with ethnic conflict. Lastly, people were alarmed about the enchanting powers of the museum. What if there are other visitors who got too carried away in this giant snow globe?

Our last stop was back in the TV room again, focusing on the founding episode of *Resurrection Ertuğrul*. I looked at how it compared to *Magnificent Century,* where we started our journey. I used discourse analysis to show the metaphorical backbone of the script, its core sensibilities and the public reaction to it. Investigating the gender roles articulated by the series I conveyed what kind of men and women make up the neo-Ottoman nostalgia. A severe divide between Christianity and Islam, a nomadic environment anchored in traditional authority, and Ertuğrul as an honorable yet lonely hero paralleled the nostalgic-populist self-portrayal of Erdogan in the Conquest rally. My interviews pointed to the strong appeal of the show among a segment of the population. My informants' comparison of *Magnificent Century* to *Resurrection Ertuğrul,* as well as their own interpretation of why they are drawn to it underlined a gendered divide in viewership. Finally, the way the series underlined their ownership to Ottoman history reminded me once again that the history wars in Turkey are far from concluded.

As I conclude my dissertation on nostalgia, once itself seen as an epidemic—we are all as postmodern state subjects living through an unprecedented pandemic, which among many other dire consequences, induces many and intense feelings. In light of my theorization of nostalgia, I can't help but wonder who will have the mobilizing power to convert the free-flowing manifold feelings caused by COVID19 into meaningful emotions. Right now, the nation-state is certainly what we look for help to administer us out of this mess. We get frustrated by inaction, disorganization and a scarcity of medical supplies. We lose people to sickness, we fall sick, we feel awful. Our feelings bubble over, and we find it hard to hold ourselves together. Every day we try to get by, relying on emotional management techniques of an era which is fast fleeting away. We do yoga, we pray, we talk to our loved ones. But, who will we look to when we want to organize these free-flowing feelings, after, one day—hopefully—this pandemic is over? Will we want the nation-states to commemorate the dead, and give us a space to mass-mourn our feelings, thus organize them into national emotions? Will we scroll Netflix for a documentary on *New York During the Days of Corona?* Or will we flock to the next product which will give us a sense of normalcy—an immune-boosting, happy-inducing lychee powder perhaps… And I know, we, as subjects—or as some researcher's potential informants—will have the agency to make our own meaning of the core Corona sensibilities. Perhaps these musings are my attempt to answer the social science demand to address "What needs to be done next?"

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Appendix: Methodology

In order to investigate Ottoman revival in the making, I treated it as a dynamic process observed in two forms: state-sponsored neo-Ottomanism, and popular Ottomania. Ottomania is the popular-cultural Ottoman nostalgia observed in TV series and leisure activities, such as Turkish spas, restaurants, and photo-booths. It is best observed in the commercial sphere, and consumption practices. Neo-Ottomanism, on the other hand, is government-run nostalgia which manifests in museums, commemorations, speeches and policies. As my particular interest was in the intersection of these two forms of nostalgia in the public sphere, I relied on multiple methods to unpack how Ottoman nostalgia is produced, mobilized and contested. I used ethnography, textual analysis and interviews to broaden the levels of analysis: 1) Ethnographic fieldwork in the *Panorama History Museum of Conquest* in Istanbul, and the Commemoration of the Conquest, both powerful sites of state-led neo-Ottomanism. 2) Textual analysis of the popular television show *Magnificent Century*, the best-known vehicle of the popular cultural Ottomanian fever, and *Resurrection Ertugrul*, the state-led TV show featuring the modest nomadic beginnings of the Ottoman Empire, and 3) Interviews in six diverse cities, exploring how ordinary people make sense of both state-led and popular manifestations.

I coded my interview and fieldwork data (80 interviews and notes documenting approximately 360 hours of field work) which allows me to establish linkages between demographic groups and discursive clusters. I relied on YouTube, YouTube comments and Netflix to watch and analyze the TV series, and gather the general public reaction. These different mediums necessitated different approaches to coding. Coding the rally

script and the series, I wore my "clustering hat" to first look for meta- themes and then analytically important targeted themes which particularly speak to my research interest. For example, emotions in nostalgic forms. Coding the interviews, I assessed how much of my clustering, and interpretation holds; in other words, how do people from different backgrounds respond to what I have identified as a theme, and do they even recognize it as an important theme? Coding the field notes from the museum, this process gets more reiterative. As I am present in my notes, my interpretation and people's reaction become more entangled. Where collective memory studies usually focus on one level – state, society, or popular culture, limiting understanding of the complex interactions among them (Olick 1999, Schwartz 1991) – my project brings together state-led efforts, popular culture, and social perceptions thereof, which lets me see how state-led efforts are contested and how different groups 'buy in' to these efforts to different degrees. In this section, I briefly talk about the theoretical—if not philosophical—perspective which guided my journey. Then, I summarize different methods which I employed to answer respective questions.

I embarked on my field research geared with Deleuze and Guattari's writings on relativity of time and rhizomes—a metaphor for understanding the world that emphasizes the necessity of thinking *with* the world rather than thinking *about* the world (Holland, 2013). For Deleuze & Guattari, both discourse and the world outside are "heterogeneous multiplicities. That is, each are composed of innumerable elements co-existing in the simplest" (45). The aim is not to represent the world as it is or explain what it means, but to survey and map its tendencies or "becomings."

Thinking through rhizomes is an alternative to thinking in tree-shaped accounts of the world, which implies imposing a privileged perspective upon the world. Rhizomes ceaselessly establish connections among semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances, coexisting with one another (47). They move in unseen directions and ways, but are limited by their outside environment. Deleuze and Guattari's example, "the orchid and the wasp," works this way by "de-territorializing the surface-coloring code of the other, only to re-territorialize it for their own sake, as part of the reproductive system of the orchid, and the nutritional motor-schema of the wasp." This is an instance of double-becoming, or what is known in biology as a-parallel evolution.

Thinking about neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania from a rhizomatic perspective shows how these two nostalgic forms, while delineating their own boundaries, also reproduce each other, doubly becoming what they are, two very different things on the chromatic level. When we think through rhizomes, it becomes easier to see the museum, *Magnificent Century*, *Resurrection Ertugrul*, and the spectacular commemorations, as tendencies of a double becoming. My task has been to think about these phenomena and cultural sites *through them*, not outside of them. Hence I spent months at the museum, watched *Magnificent Century* and *Resurrection Ertugrul* rigorously, attended commemorations, and travelled to six Turkish cities in 2011 and in 2016-17 to interview people.

Deleuze & Guattari's conception of time has been crucial in thinking about the use and prevalence of nostalgia, and the link between the contemporary to the past and future. In this model, the past is a virtual repository of multiple potentials, where the present is the actualization of such potentials among many. The future is an

undeterminable selection, from among the inexhaustible set of virtual conditions. However, the present is not necessarily determined by its actualization alone, but will have been determined by future actualizations, each of which alters the relations between that present and its relevant pasts. In this synthesis, desire is "a force that scans the past from the perspective of the present in search of possible combinations to actualize" (2013, 20-21). In this non-linear view of time, social science's role is to scan this virtual realm from the perspective of today in order to map its potential to become otherwise. Neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania, in this sense, stood between past and future, as one of the many outcomes of the past and as a point of future actualizations in Turkey, as two different articulations of the force of nostalgia.

As the previous chapter has shown, as I dug deeper to "find" the origins of Ottoman nostalgia in Turkish past I encountered many potential "foundational" moments. This is exactly because of the rhizomatic nature of time. If I went back further, I would probably encounter even more of these would-be "beginnings." The same applies to my entry point to Ottoman nostalgia, the kind of trajectory my research took me to, and my concluding argument. I entered the "now" in the most sensational moment of *Magnificent Century's* fame. I observed the guilty pleasures it ignited, and the backlash it caused. I monitored in linear time how state officials, including Erdogan, called for its cancellation. I watched how in the span of a few years the state channel came up with its own version of Ottoman series—and how they incorporated this popular element to their official neo-Ottomanism. I thus concluded that the state learned from and coopted this playful and complex vision of the Ottoman past to make it more belligerent, more rigid, and ultimately more patriarchal. Yet, I recognize that this interpretation is shaped by the

very moment of my entry, and someone who entered the field some other time could say that *Magnificent Century* would not have been possible without the rise of Islamism of the previous decades, or for that matter if not for a centuries-long Ottoman-Turkish modernization. This recognition does not take away from my argument analyzing the last decade. This blip I captured allows me to complicate and tangle the relationship between neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania by engaging in ethnography and in-depth interviews to see how people from diverse backgrounds make both these nostalgic forms their own.

Textual Analysis of Magnificent Century and Resurrection Ertugrul:

I watched the first season of *Magnificent Century* and coded the first four episodes rigorously alongside examining viewer responses. I paid attention to the complexity of these characters' inner life worlds, their constant identity crises, and the core sensibilities conveyed through the show. To show how viewers receive agentic and sexualized women, I paid attention to how YouTube viewers and my own interviewees respond to Ottomania's representations of women's agency. The analytical codes I have used for *Magnificent Century* are; "luxury, and pomp," "justice," "powerful women," "sad women," "language," "moral complexity," and "authenticity."

As *Resurrection Ertugrul* started airing in 2014, it became a favorite show in Turkey, especially among AKP supporters. At the Panorama Museum of Conquest, when I mentioned to the employees that I investigated *Magnificent Century* as part of my project, they urged me to watch *Resurrection Ertugrul* instead. I took this cue, and included a question in my interview schedule on *Resurrection Ertugrul*. Once the interviewees talked about their take on both series I also asked them if they could compare the two series. My interviews as a running resource proved to be a crucial move

in understanding the tension and the interaction between neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania. Finally, I watched the series and coded the first episode to provide a comparison between these two nostalgic forms, and the emotions that are allowed in them. The codes I used are "Islam versus Christianity," "Ertugrul the lonely hero," "Nomadism," "Traditional Society," "Helpless women," and "Meet Cute." I compared my codes regarding gender to further dissect the two shows' divergent approaches to "women's place." I read Süleyman's and Ertuğrul's characters in tandem to see how their sexuality was portrayed. I paid close attention to *mise-en-scène* to identify the kind of material culture displayed in these two series. I paid attention to dominant emotions, and also to the moments of emotional governance—emotional regulation by the state the series provided. Concluding my dissertation analysis with this final practice provided a temporary closure to the rhizomatic unfolding of Ottoman nostalgia in Turkey.

***The Conquest of Constantinople Rally*:**

In order to observe the relationship between the performance of the neo-Ottomanist spectacle and the audience reception, I combined ethnography of the rally with audience interviews [discussed below]. I examined the ritualistic commemoration of the 563rd year of the Conquest of Constantinople, employing ethnographic discourse analysis.[25] Here, I observed the elements of social performances: script, actors, observers of the performance, *mise-en-scène*, symbolic production, and social power (Alexander, 2011). When these elements, which are found "de-fused" and fragmented in a complex

[25] Gowan (2010, pp. 24–25) looks at how competing discourses are taken up, reworked, and performed by people on the street through an ethnographic discourse analysis. This approach challenges the opposition between large scale structural forces and cultures defined as small scale or local.

society, are “re-fused” successfully, a sense of authenticity is achieved. While coding the transcript and the video of the ritual, I paid attention to populist mechanisms at work, which made visible the rally’s effects and affects, bringing the content, dialogue, and emotions between Erdogan, the most important and powerful *actor* at the rally, and the *audience*, to the fore. I analyzed the *collective representation* in the script by coding for the themes of conquest, binary structures such as us vs. them, past vs. future, and enemies vs. friends. Coding for emotion included factors such as the scene decor, music, laser show, and flying jets, which also brought *mise-en-scène* and *symbolic production* to the fore. Centering the political leader as the main actor or performer of populism, while focusing on affect (Moffitt, 2016, p. 52), helped me “explain the appeal of leaders to their followers, without reducing the latter’s behavior to either manipulation or irrational and anomic action or to a utilitarian nationalism” (de la Torre, 2000, p. 1). One key insight from social performance theory is that the six elements of the social performance are de-fused in a complex society. In this context, the reception of the audience becomes a litmus test if the performance has re-fused these elements in a convincing way (Alexander *et al.*, 2006).

Panorama History Museum of Conquest:

I spent six months at *Panorama History Museum of Conquest* collecting ethnographic data in 2016, and applied ethnographic discourse analysis both while collecting data and analyzing field notes. I attended the museum three days a week, and spent four hours on a typical fieldwork day. My proposed research question for this portion of the project included examining the affective aspect of everyday engagement with history. This was a difficult venture: Should I only watch, or should I ask questions?

Would cueing be appropriate, or would it wrongly prompt people to talk about emotions even though it was not on their mind? I ended up collecting all sorts of data. I saw people crying and gawking, but sometimes somebody approached me to complain or reminisce without any kind of cue. When I asked people about their feelings, they talked about how they cannot explain them but assured me they exist. "I can't explain it, but, 'Ah[26]' I am so moved." I interviewed the representatives of *public culture*, in this case the museum director, curator and artists who worked at the museum at various stages. The most common method I used at the museum was hanging out at the entrance of the panoramic exhibit, observing and documenting general reactions. I also stood in front of the exhibit, leaning towards the railing in a contemplative position and people approached me to talk about their impressions. Sometimes, I waited at the end of the exhibit to gather people's reactions after they have gone through the interactive part. Another technique I employed was acting as a guide to finding Fatih's silhouette in the clouds, as this was one of the most popular pursuits at the museum. This usually built rapport and fostered further conversation. One time, I joined a travel group, spending a day with them on a municipality-run sightseeing tour. When I intentionally approached people, I usually asked the following questions: 1) Is this your first time at the museum? 2) What do you think about the museum? 3) Which part did you like the most? 4) How did the museum make you feel? 5) Would you recommend it to others? I also asked them contextual questions such as: 1) What other museums do you like to visit? 2) Do you read/buy/consume other things regarding the Ottoman past? If people started to talk to me

[26] An expression of astonishment, and at times pain and heart-ache in Turkish.

without prompting, the conversation evolved in a less structured way. I recorded conversations by taking jottings right after the interaction, and then wrote these as field notes after each museum day. I coded the collection, which resulted in building towards four general themes: Suffering and Gratefulness, Mourning the Bygone Glory, Organic Advisers, and Surprise at Being Chosen.

Interviews:

In 2011, I conducted twenty-five interviews in Istanbul, Izmir and Kayseri. In 2017-18 I conducted fifty more interviews in six different cities: Istanbul, Izmir, Kayseri, Ankara, Diyarbakir, and Trabzon. Istanbul, as a metropole, contains a diverse population; Ankara is the capital and represents the governmental professional sector; I selected Izmir is to represent the coastal secular/liberal position frequently in opposition to the current government's cultural policies; Kayseri is a good representative of "Anatolian tigers" (the conservative, business-oriented population emerging in the country's heartland, such as Konya, Bursa, and Denizli); and Trabzon represents the ultra-nationalistic northeastern Black Sea region. I went to Diyarbakir to include Kurdish voices. I was able to interview seven of my twenty-five interviewees again in 2017, which provided continuity, and fruitful potential for comparison. These interviews provided a running resource to ground the process of analysis. The two phases provided a longitudinal perspective to get at the interaction between neo-Ottomanism and Ottomania. Rather than falsely interpreting Ottomania's trajectory as a rise and fall, with the help of interviews I saw the complexity of the dialectical relationship between the two phenomena, and how people from different backgrounds have been interpellated differently to Ottoman nostalgia.

These interviews lasted between one to three hours. I reached my interviewees through an independent research agency, which recruited people based on the following parameters: people equally distributed around the political spectrum, educational attainment, age range, religiosity and occupational background, which gave me a socio-economically diverse sample (interviewee characteristics are summarized in Table 4). I paid my interviewees 100 TL each, which roughly equals $25, meeting with them at their homes or workplaces, coffee shops, or the central office of the recruitment agency in Istanbul.

Table 4: Demographics

City		**Education**	
Ankara	5	PhD	0
Istanbul	20	MA	0
Izmir	5	College	16
Kayseri	5	High-School	21
Trabzon	5	Middle-School	7
Diyarbakir	5	Primary School	6
Gender		**Political Affiliation**	
Male	25	MHP	5
Female	20	AKP	17
Age Range		CHP	11
20-35	20	HDP	1
36-55	20	National Outlook	3
56-70	10	Other	13

My aim was to capture subjective emotions felt and articulated by my informants. To this end, I followed interpretive interviewing, which allows researchers access to an emotional landscape that brings a broader social dimension to individual motivation

(Pugh 2012). Rather than taking incoherent arguments as signs of contradiction, this vision adds emotions as the missing vector that holds multiple arguments together. Pugh reminds us that interviewees not only tell how they think and feel but how it feels to feel that way: the particular emotional environments that they inhabit, and the particular pressures that this environment puts on them. This in-depth technique and the data collected offer four levels of information: the *honorable*, *schematic*, *visceral* and *meta-feelings*. In the *honorable* level interviewees present themselves in a light that they think socially acceptable, in the *schematic* version they use jokes, metaphors and cues that reveal how they see the world. In the *visceral* part, they talk about how they feel, their emotions, desires, morality, through using emotional word cues, whereas the *meta-feelings* get at how feeling the way they feel makes them feel: the possible discrepancy between how they feel and how they ought to feel. For the museum, I formulated questions that get at the reasons that make people come to the museum, taking it further by including how their visit performatively affect their emotional state. I have included word cues such as excitement, to prompt people to talk about the affective aspect of their visit. At the museum, my questions such as "Which part of the exhibit did you find most exciting?" are geared to understand performative and experiential aspects of consumption of the past and how nostalgia works in these interactive setting where people hear, see and walk through an exhibit, making memories about a specific history.

To get at the audience response to the rally, I showed the interviewees video segments of the 2016 rally, asking them if they had attended or watched it on TV, and drew out their responses. This interactive interviewing method, akin to TV watching or YouTube viewing, yielded a fruitful conversation about the use of conquest in mass

rallies. Given the important role of media including TV and internet in creating and reinforcing the populist spectacle, reproducing the spectacle in an interview setting provided a more complex understanding of audience reception (Moffitt 2016, p. 87). This part enabled observing how people talked through emotional inculcation, awareness of feelings, and reasoning behind their stance on populist nostalgia. I translated the interviews from Turkish to English and coded both the interview data and the commemoration transcript using the ATLAS.ti qualitative discourse analysis software, which allowed me to identify and thematize interpretative clusters, and then to establish linkages with different demographic characteristics.

Conclusion

My methodology allowed me to pursue nostalgia in its material manifestations, including both metaphorical and material dimensions, and helped me see the ways nostalgia in contemporary Turkey creates a new "Turkish self". Modernity triggers a sense of wanting to go back to an earlier and more enchanted place (Löwy and Sayre, 2001, Benjamin, 1936). Popular culture imagines this nostalgic Turkish self as a TV-watching, restaurant-going fun self whose emotions include desire, enjoyment, and lust. This stylish self is driven by drama, pursues pleasurable true love, consumes exotic tastes, and gets sensual through a massage in a steaming Turkish bath. The state, on the other hand, envisions a nationalistic and devoted Turkish self, who gets hyped by the Ottoman army's music, stands in awe by new gigantic architectural structures, and is made proud by the idea that he/she descends from a religious, just, and war-waging Sultan. As I will show in the forthcoming chapters, my multi-method approach helped me to understand that these two

selves are not always mutually exclusive, despite their seemingly vastly different modes of interpellation.