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MODERNITY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRACY: FEMINIST
MOVEMENTS IN POST-1980 TURKEY

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the relationship between the crisis of modernity, the emergence of social movement politics and democracy in post-1980 Turkey, with a focus on feminist movements. It highlights the significance of feminist politics and women's activism since the 1980s in Turkey, where gender issues continually shape (and are shaped by) the terms of the debates on modernity and democracy. It examines the ways in which different groups of women have supported, reproduced, challenged and transformed the projects and visions of modernities articulated or imposed by state elites and male-dominated social movements. The thesis argues that women's interventions contribute to the democratization process by unmasking the gendered discourses of the Kemalist project of modernity, Islamist movements and Kurdish nationalism, by contesting the identities and missions imposed on women and by exposing the exclusions embedded in everyday life and in the current democratic framework.

While the focus is on Turkey, the dissertation also aims to contribute to the broader debates on social movements. It makes three interrelated arguments. First, in both Western and non-Western contexts, contemporary social movements can be viewed as sites of alternative modernities – sites in which the modernizing projects of state elites are subverted and redefined. Second, social movements can be both the expression and the vehicle of democratization. Third, while much of the existing literature views social movements as inherently democratic, my study of the Turkish feminist movement reveals that they may also show exclusionary tendencies. In their mobilizing activities social movements often prioritize one identity over the rest. The invocation of an essentialist identity is evident in the Turkish feminist movement, which empowers some women, marginalizing others. Yet, feminist politics and women's activism in Turkey also expose the gendered discourses of Kemalism, Islamism and Kurdish nationalism, which homogenize communities and assign women particular missions and identities. Women's interventions make visible the internal heterogeneity of these communities, undermine the identity politics of collectivist projects and, thus, contribute to the reconstruction of a more inclusive and democratic political community in Turkey. At the same time, feminist politics is weakened by the lack of alliances among different groups of women. Women's groups (feminist and non-feminist) need to address the issue of the diversity of women if they aim to continue contributing to the democratization process in Turkey.

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	<i>Anavatan Partisi</i>	Motherland Party
AP	<i>Adalet Partisi</i>	Justice Party
CHP	<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>	Republican People's Party
ÇATOM	<i>Çok Amaçlı Toplum Merkezleri</i>	Multipurpose Community Centers
DEHAP	<i>Demokratik Halk Partisi</i>	Democratic People's Party
DEP	<i>Demokrasi Partisi</i>	Democracy Party
DGM	<i>Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri</i>	State Security Courts
DP	<i>Demokrat Parti</i>	Democrat Party
DSP	<i>Demokratik Sol Parti</i>	Democratic Left Party
DYP	<i>Doğru Yol Partisi</i>	True Path Party
EU	<i>Avrupa Birliği</i>	European Union
FP	<i>Fazilet Partisi</i>	Virtue Party
HADEP	<i>Halkın Demokrasi Partisi</i>	People's Democracy Party
HEP	<i>Halkın Emek Partisi</i>	People's Labour Party
KA-DER	<i>Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği</i>	Association for Support and Training of Woman Candidates
KA-MER	<i>Kadın Merkezi</i>	Woman's Center
KSSGM	<i>Kadının Statüsü ve Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü</i>	Directorate General on the Status and the Problems of Women
MHP	<i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i>	Nationalist Action Party
MNP	<i>Milli Nizam Partisi</i>	National Order Party
MSP	<i>Milli Selamet Partisi</i>	National Salvation Party
ÖDP	<i>Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi</i>	Freedom and Solidarity Party
PKK	<i>Partia Karkaren Kürdistan</i>	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RP	<i>Refah Partisi</i>	Welfare Party
SP	<i>Saadet Partisi</i>	Felicity Party
SHP	<i>Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti</i>	Social Democratic Populist Party
TİP	<i>Türkiye İşçi Partisi</i>	Turkish Workers' Party
YÖK	<i>Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu</i>	Council of Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation explores the relationship between the crisis of modernity, the emergence of social movement politics and democracy in post-1980 Turkey, with a focus on feminist movements. Drawing from the literature on social movements and the debates on the crisis of modernity, the dissertation explores the relationship between modernity and contemporary social movements in order to develop a framework to better understand the current crisis and prospects of the Kemalist project of modernity and the ever-changing relationship between the state and society in the Turkish context. More specifically, this dissertation explores the ways in which new social movements, particularly feminist and women's activisms, attempt to redefine the political community, to rearticulate the relationship between the public and the private, and thus contribute to the process of democratization in Turkey.

This dissertation, then, is about the nature of and prospects for transformative politics in late modernity. It identifies social movements as potential agents for transformative politics, as sites of struggles for redistribution and recognition, as sites of empowerment (and sometimes of domination) and of identity/difference construction. The study also contributes to contemporary discussions on modernity and possibility of alternative modernities. It aims to explore the gendered nature of competing visions, projects, and practices of modernity and identity formation in Turkey. By focusing on the discourses and activism of Turkish and Kurdish feminist groups and a group of Islamist

women¹, it explores the ways in which agents perpetuate, question and subvert not only the gender(ed) discourses of the state, political Islam and Kurdish nationalism but also the competing, and sometimes overlapping, narratives of modernity, nationalism, and identity/difference in Turkey.

This dissertation makes three closely interrelated theoretical arguments. First, drawing on the works of contemporary social and political theorists, the dissertation emphasizes the centrality of contemporary social movements as the main agents of social and political change in this late-modern world. Indeed, new social movements, such as the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, the peace movement, feminist and lesbian and gay liberation movements, challenge the very foundations of modernity by bringing into light repressed and/or devalued identities and marginalized issues. They expose the homogenizing and universalizing aspects of modernity. The dissertation argues that the emergence of new social movements can be interpreted not only as a response to the limitations of the project of (Western) modernity but also as sites of possible new modernities. In other words, contemporary social movements not only expose the inability and the failure of the modern project to deliver its promises of progress and emancipation (for instance, feminism exposes the patriarchal character of modernity), but also attempt to redefine the discourse of modernity in their own terms, by articulating new discourses and practices. Contemporary social movements, then, can be

¹ Islamist women in Turkey do not self-identify as “feminist”. In fact, most of them reject feminism because it is associated with “the imperialist West” – and thus viewed as an “alien” discourse and practice – and it connotes “promiscuity”. In this dissertation, however, I focus on Islamist women (see Chapter 6) because some of them – while rejecting the label “feminist” – critique gender-based subordination of women to men and contest sexist norms and practices in society. I do not employ the term “feminist” to describe them because they do not identify themselves as “feminist”. For more on this, see Chapter 1, section 4 (especially footnote # 39).

viewed as sites of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to contest, subvert, and transform modernity and/or modernizing projects of state elites.

Secondly, contemporary social movements must also be seen as a reflection of the ever-changing relationship between the state and society as they expose the complex processes of inclusion and exclusion that have existed in our societies. They not only expose the problems associated with the current democratic framework, but also attempt to redefine the proper boundaries of the political arena, its participants, its institutions, its processes and its agenda. Contemporary movements are not only engaged in constitution of new identities, but they also contribute to the redefinition of the practice of politics by adopting new social practices and political strategies in order to push for socioeconomic, cultural and political transformations. Contemporary social movements, thus, can be viewed as sites of alternative democratic possibilities. They not only expand and democratize the existing public space(s), but also create new (counter-) publics. The thesis argues that the cultural struggles of contemporary social movements over meanings and representations are closely intertwined with their struggles for expansion of political and economic rights. Feminist movements, for instance, contribute to democratic changes both at the level of civil society and the state, by exposing to public debate processes of inclusion and exclusion within the state and in society. Feminist movements are engaged in creation and expansion of public spheres throughout society to render new issues visible in public debate. They aim to expand democratization beyond the institutions of the state into the intimate sphere. For women, democratization refers not only to citizenship rights and practices in the public sphere, but also to democratization of everyday life, autonomy, and freedom from oppression and violence.

Thirdly, the dissertation makes the argument that it would be problematic to assume that all contemporary social movements are inherently democratic and that they necessarily contribute to the processes of democratization of social and political life. These movements may themselves show exclusionary and undemocratic tendencies. As will be brought out in this dissertation, this has been the case with the Turkish feminist movement. Since social movements are themselves structured by power relations, they may also be sites of democratic struggles. The dissertation, thus, argues that we should avoid the idealization of social movements, moving beyond such simplistic dichotomies as progressive/reactionary or democratic/repressive to explore the historically contingent ways in which different aspects (co)exist and operate in dynamic tension. Contemporary social movements are neither progressive nor reactionary per se, neither democratic nor undemocratic. Rather they can *simultaneously* be both. They contain inherent contradictions that their discourses and activism reflect and strive to reconcile. They can be sites of empowerment and resistance as well as domination. Thus, the significance and characteristics of these movements cannot be divorced from the context (political, economic, social and cultural) within which they arise and operate.

The nature of the contemporary society (“modern” versus “postmodern”) is one of the issues that lie at the heart of the debates concerning the crisis and the prospects of modernity. This sense of crisis has resulted in questioning not only the very nature and the boundaries of our communities, but also the boundaries of what is defined as the political, as demonstrated in the debates on issues such as nationalism, multiculturalism and identity politics. Indeed, contemporary social movements challenge the modern notion that territorial, national community constitutes the sole basis and the boundary of

individual and collective identity. They disrupt the myths of national homogeneity and communal unity by offering alternative identifications, belongings and loyalties.

Since the 1980s questions of ethnicity, religion and gender have challenged both the identity and the boundaries of the “Turkish nation”, as originally defined by the Kemalist elite. In this period, Turkey witnessed the proliferation of new social movements – feminist, Islamist and Kurdish nationalist. Just as the new social movements in the West have challenged the ideal of universalism contained in modernity by bringing to light repressed identities and demands, these movements in Turkey have shaken the pillars of the hegemonic Kemalist discourse, which is founded on Western modernity. They have operated as the symptoms of the crisis of Kemalism (Keyman 1995). They are significant as they have challenged the deeply entrenched certainties of the Kemalist project of modernity – particularly nationalism and secularism. Indeed, post-1980 Turkey has been characterized by the loss of old certainties of Kemalism (Kasaba 1997) and the crisis of the secular, unitary state.

This dissertation argues that the social movements that emerged in Turkey in the 1980s are significant not only because they have exposed the limitations of the Kemalist project of modernity, but also because they have emerged as sites of identity/difference formation and, as especially in the case of Islamist movements, as sites of possible new modernities. The emergence of these social movements can be understood as an attempt to redefine the political community in Turkey. The very basis of Turkish nationalism, espoused by Kemalists, has been to create a homogeneous national community and identity by imposing uniformity on diversity. Contemporary social movements in Turkey operate as signs of the dissolution of this “legitimizing identity” (Castells 1997: 8). While

there are significant differences among and within these movements, they all challenge the Kemalist understanding of a unifying conception of secular national identity and affirm the difference of women, Islamists and the Kurds. They also herald the emergence of multiple and heterogeneous public spheres.²

In this dissertation, the above arguments about modernity, social movements and democracy are developed through an analysis of feminist movements in Turkey that emerged in the 1980s as part of the crisis of the Kemalist project of modernity. Through an analysis of feminist movements in post-1980 Turkey, the dissertation argues that contemporary social movements can indeed contribute to democratization and to the development of a more inclusive and democratic political community, where differences are recognized and negotiated. *More specifically, the analysis of the discourses and activism of Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women reveals that women's interventions contribute to democratization in Turkey by undermining the identity politics of the competing collectivist and gendered discourses of Kemalism, political Islam and Kurdish nationalism. Yet this study also suggests that contemporary movements are neither inherently democratic nor inclusive. Turkish feminism has empowered some women and marginalized others, most notably Kurdish feminists and Islamist women. If feminist movements seek to continue to contribute to the process of democratization in Turkey by helping create more inclusive and democratic communities, their starting point should be to address the issue of the diversity of women.*

² Feyzi Baban argues that the peaceful formation and negotiation of different identities in Turkey require a critical rethinking of the Republican public sphere, which has been dominated by the Kemalist national narrative that views Turkish national identity as the only legitimate identity of the public sphere, thus failing to accommodate different identity claims. For an excellent discussion of the emergence and transformation of the Republican public sphere in Turkey see Baban 1999.

It is important to explore the activism and discourses of feminist groups in the Turkish context for several reasons. Firstly, as in many post-colonial contexts, in Turkey national identity and cultural and religious difference have been articulated as forms of control over women (Kandiyoti 1991a; Göle 1997b). Gender has been central in shaping (and being shaped by) contradictory discourses and projects of modernity and the debates among them. In Turkey, within the discourses and projects articulated especially by Kemalist secularists and Islamists, women are ascribed different identities and roles: they are portrayed either as symbols of modernity or backwardness, or as embodiments of cultural authenticity. The terms of the debates on modernization and democratization and the possibility of an articulation of a new project of modernity in contemporary Turkey, then, can be better understood by exploring the competing discourses on gender.

Secondly, in Turkey the regulation of women's appearance in the public sphere, their bodies, sexuality, and behaviour, has been central to the articulation of communal identity and difference. The feminist movement(s) in Turkey have emerged side-by-side with the Islamist and Kurdish nationalist movements, which have their own gendered discourses. Women's groups (feminist or non-feminist) have criticized not only the hegemonic Kemalist discourse but also Islamist movements and Kurdish nationalism for their totalizing and universalizing collectivist discourses, which, like Kemalism, reinforce a particular identity for women. Although the communitarian discourses have constructed images of women differently, they have all identified women as symbols of (national, ethnic, religious) communities and the guardians and transmitters of community values, morality and culture. By emphasizing women's differences, women's groups within and outside these communities have made visible the internal heterogeneity of these so-called

homogeneous communities. By undermining the identity politics of these competing collectivist discourses, they have contributed to the process of democratization in Turkey.

Thirdly, the study of the feminist movement(s) in Turkey suggests that contemporary social movements cannot be assumed to be democratic. Social movements in Turkey, including the feminist movement(s), have critiqued the Kemalist articulation of the nation as an organic community for its disciplining and exclusionary tendencies. This critique has opened up a space to imagine collectivities unimaginable from within the exclusionary space of the discourse of national community articulated by Kemalism. Yet, while social movements in Turkey, as in other contexts, pointed to the homogenizing characteristic of national community, they have also invoked the discourse of community to mobilize activism and engage the broader public in their alternative discourses. In their efforts to produce unity and to generate activism, these movements have themselves ended up universalizing a particular identity or prioritizing one identity over the rest.

This universalization of particularity and the invocation of an exclusionary discourse of community, which have especially marginalized women of different ethnic groups and religious convictions, were evident in the Turkish feminist movement(s) in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. Turkish feminist groups problematized the organicist, collectivist and gendered aspects of the Kemalist national identity by bringing women's difference into the male-dominated public sphere. Yet, they failed to question the secular and ethnic dimensions of the Kemalist project of modernity. While they recognized differences among women and put emphasis on the multiple sources of oppression, they projected a homogeneous, essentialized identity to make public women's oppression based on gender. Such an essentialist and unitary construction of the identity "women"

enabled feminists to challenge the dominant gender discourse, but, at the same time, it marginalized other women's groups (Islamist women groups and Kurdish feminists) who have different agendas.

Finally, a study of the feminist movement(s) in Turkey provides an occasion to explore the heterogeneity of Turkish society. By presenting a comparative analysis of discourses of different women's groups (secular Turkish, Islamist and Kurdish) this study reveals not only the shifting gender identities, but also the intersections and reconstructions of ethnic, religious and gender identities in Turkey. By analyzing the current fragmentation of the feminist movement(s) along the lines of religion and ethnicity, and studying feminisms in relation to both other social movements and the state in the Turkish context, this dissertation aims to link the growing body of literature on feminisms, nationalisms and the state and, thus, to further our understanding of the intersections/interrelations of gender, nation, state and religion in the Middle East.

By studying the feminist movement(s) in Turkey as a social movement, the dissertation also aims to build on, and contribute to, current debates on modernity in Turkey. Most studies of modernity in Turkey have viewed modernity as a top-down, state-led project, initiated and imposed by the nationalist modernizing elite to mould society. While these studies have accorded agency to the state and modernizing state elites, focusing on the political-institutional realm, they have ignored individuals and groups in society as active agents, viewing them as *objects* of the Kemalist project of modernity. Not only the Kemalist modern project, but also the perspectives used by many prominent Turkish academicians to study it, have been subjected to criticism by leftists, Islamists, Kurdish nationalists, postmodernists, "radical democrats", and feminists.

Contributors to a recent book edited by Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (1997), criticize the dominant state-centered analyses of Turkish modernization and call for a more multi-layered approach which would shift the focus away from the state, as the civilizing agent, to society (see Kasaba 1997, Mardin 1997; also Göle 1997a, Keyder 1997).³ While Deniz Kandiyoti (1997) criticizes both critics and promoters of Turkish modernization for their failure to critically interrogate the notion of the modern itself, Kasaba urges us to “bring the society back” into our analysis in order to “see most men and women living in Turkey not merely as *objects* of a project but also as *subjects* of their history” (1997: 30-31, italics mine). Along similar lines, Şerif Mardin (1997) criticizes both the Kemalist and the Marxist literature on Turkish modernization for their tendency to emphasize the macro projects of social change at the expense of the micro components of social transformation. For Mardin, such structuralist approaches to Turkish modernization “can be enriched by an approach that takes the life-world and the ‘everyday’ into account”.⁴

Nilüfer Göle is one of the prominent scholars who challenged the existing state-centered literature on modernity in Turkey, placing activism and discourses of Islamist women at the center of her analysis of the Islamist movement and Turkish modernity. Following Göle, this dissertation contributes to the discussion of modernity in Turkey by

³ Contributors to the volume not only critically examine the state-centered analyses of Turkish modernization, but also critically engage with the Kemalist project of modernity.

⁴ This is precisely what the contributors to the recently edited volume by Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (2002), entitled *Fragments of Culture: the Everyday of Modern Turkey*, aim to accomplish. Criticizing the dominant state-centric Turkish social science, the volume focuses on the “everyday” experiences of modernity, daily life experiences of people in Turkey. The contributors explore the ongoing process of social fragmentation and stratification, consumption habits and styles, new forms of cultural expression, the politics of culture through analyses of language, folklore, film, and cartoons, and the close relation between identity politics and consumer culture in Turkey.

placing feminist groups and women's activism at the center, examining the ways in which different groups of women have challenged, subverted and transformed the projects and visions of modernity articulated and imposed by both state elites (at least some aspects of it) and by male-dominated social movements. Exploring modernity from the vantage point of differently situated women's groups necessitates the displacement of state-centric analyses. Yet, while it is important to "bring the society back" into our analyses of Turkish modernity, it is also crucial to pay attention to the role of states in shaping the context in which social movements, as potential agents of transformation, emerge and operate. In many contexts, states serve as referents for feminist movements whether they seek entry into or autonomy from the state. The conceptualization of feminism(s) as a social movement, I argue, enables not only a more nuanced examination of the structures and agents of modernity, but also a more nuanced discussion of the transformations that both the state and society has been undergoing in Turkey.

The dissertation also aims to build on and contribute to the existing literature on women in Turkey. Despite the extensive literature on women, gender and feminism in Turkey, there are no systematic attempts to analyze the feminist movement(s) as a social movement.⁵ Also, an analysis of the body of literature on women in Turkey reveals that most studies on women, which were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, adopted a Kemalist perspective. Most of these studies adopted a state-centered analysis, emphasizing the role Kemalist reforms played for improving the status of women in Turkey (İnan 1962, 1964, 1975).⁶ They argued that the high status and equality that

⁵ A notable exception is Nilüfer Göle's work (1996a) where she studies the veiling movement of university students in Turkey as a social movement.

⁶ For an analysis of the literature on women until the 1980s see Yeşim Arat 1993.

women enjoyed during the pre-Islamic, golden period of the Turkish civilization ended with the Turks' conversion to Islam. Women regained their deserved place and high status in society through the reforms initiated by the Kemalist elite.

Studies conducted on women in the late 1970s and 1980s adopted a more critical stance toward Kemalism. For instance, while Nermin Abandan-Unat (1977, 1981) recognized the importance and necessity of the Kemalist reforms, she showed how they only resulted in partial changes in the status and the role of women in Turkey. Analyzing the Kemalist reforms from a Marxist perspective, Şirin Tekeli (1981) argued that the Western model promoted by Kemalists was based on capitalism. For Tekeli, women's rights played a critical role in the Kemalist struggle against the political and religious structures of the Ottoman polity. She argued that Atatürk granted political rights to women in order to dissociate his single-party regime from the European fascist dictatorships. Similarly, Kandiyoti (1989) argued that the emancipation of women was one of the "symbolic pawns" Kemalists used in their attempts to eliminate the theocratic remnants of the Ottoman polity and to establish a new legitimizing state ideology.

The new work on women and women's agency in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s employed concepts of gender and patriarchy (Tekeli 1986, 1990; Arat 1989, 1991, 1997; Sirman 1989; Kandiyoti 1989, 1991b). Issues such as domestic violence against women and women's sexuality began to be studied for the first time (Yüksel 1995; Kayır 1995). There were also various new studies of the relationship between gender and Islam (Toprak 1981a, 1994; İlyasoğlu 1994; Saktanber 1994; Kadıoğlu 1994; Acar 1995; Arat 1995; Özdalga 1998). In her seminal work, Nilüfer Göle (1996a) examined the complex relationship between modernity and Islam in Turkey. Focusing on the veiling movement

of university students in post-1980 Turkey, Göle argued that it (and the revival of Islamist movements) does not signify a total rejection of modernity.⁷ Instead, it reappropriates modernity by engendering new Muslim subjectivities that reject the collectivist definitions of Islamic identity. More recent works on the study of women have focused on the relationship among Kemalism, nationalism, Islam and feminism, criticizing previous studies for not critically examining the notion of the “modern” as an analytic category and not explicitly addressing local specificities of modernity in the Turkish context (Kandiyoti 1997; Göle 1997a, 1997b).

Although the existing literature on women in Turkey enhances our knowledge and understanding of women’s roles and status, the patriarchal nature of the state, society and family, the importance of women’s issues in shaping various debates (especially between Kemalist secularists and Islamists) on the Turkish political scene, it has some limitations. Although there is an extensive literature on feminism and the women’s movement(s) in Turkey in the 1980s, there are only a few *comparative* analyses of women’s discourses and activism in the 1990s.⁸ More importantly, although many scholars recognize religious and class differences among women, they tend to ignore the *ethnic* heterogeneity of women in Turkey, implicitly differentiating between either “Islamist women” and “secular Turkish” women (Kemalist or feminist) or middle-class professional women, working class women, rural women and housewives. Thus, there has been no systematic attempt to study the discourses and activism of Kurdish feminist groups in Turkey. This lack of attention to the ethnic differences of women in Turkey in

⁷ Göle’s study was originally published in Turkish in 1991 and translated into English in 1996. In this dissertation, the references are to the English version (1996a).

⁸ For a comparative analysis of discourses of secular feminists and Islamist women see Arat (1998).

the works of many scholars may be related to the extreme polarization between Kemalist secularists and Islamists that has occupied the Turkish political and social scene since the 1980s. This dissertation attempts to address these gaps and to contribute to the existing literature, by analyzing the discourses and activism of Turkish feminists, Islamist women and Kurdish feminist groups in the 1980s and the 1990s. More specifically, it explores the challenges mounted by Islamist women and Kurdish feminists to the hegemonic Kemalist and feminist discourses on women.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation, then, works with the concept of new social movements to explore the crisis and prospects of the Kemalist project of modernity in Turkey. To this end, Chapter 1 focuses on the relationship between the crisis of modernity and the emergence of social movement politics through critical engagement with the works of scholars such as Habermas, Giddens, and Melucci as well as feminist scholars like Fraser and Young. This chapter aims to situate the dissertation not only in the literature on modernity and social movements, but also in the broader literature on gender and politics. It also focuses on the emerging literature on “alternative” or “multiple” modernities as the thesis aims to explore the possibility of an articulation of a new, alternative project of modernity in the Turkish context. It argues that contemporary social movements serve not only as potential vehicles to realize the emancipatory and democratic potential that late modernity contains, but also as sites where alternative modernities can be articulated.

Chapter 2 refines the conceptual and theoretical framework, exploring the links between modernity, nationalism and gender. Drawing on the works of scholars of

nationalism, it is argued that nation-building projects often involve processes of homogenization and inclusion/exclusion. Focusing on the links between gender and nation is important because, as feminist critics argue, the articulation of national identity/difference often depends on the regulation of gender and control of women. The nationalization of society is often based on women's integration into nationalist projects as reproducers of national communities, as cultural transmitters, as signifiers of national difference and as participants in national struggles. Contemporary social movements expose the homogenizing nature of the nation-building projects and processes and disrupt the myth of national homogeneity by pointing to alternative identities. Feminisms raise serious questions about the supposed homogeneity of national communities by bringing into light women's differences. Drawing on the works of feminist scholars like bell hooks and Chandra Mohanty, the chapter also points to one of the problems feminist movements around the world face when they seek to articulate a common discourse and develop common strategies: they conflate interests of one group of women with the interests of *all* women and fail to recognize the diversity of women's experiences, interests and demands, stemming from their diverse locations in society. The chapter argues that if feminist movements seek to contribute to the process of democratization by helping create more inclusive communities, their starting point should be to address the issue of the diversity of women.

Analyzing the links between nationalism and gender is also crucial as it provides the framework within which I examine the Kemalist nationalist discourse and its representation of women in Chapter 3. In order to better understand the significance of the rise of social movements, in particular the feminist movement(s) in Turkey, this

chapter explores the Kemalist discourse of modernity, focusing in particular on the Kemalist understanding of national identity. It highlights the way that the Kemalist nationalist discourse viewed women both as symbols of the nation and the new secular Republic. The “progressive” narrative of Kemalism defined Turkish nationalism and Turkish national identity through the “othering” of Muslim identity. The Kemalist project of modernity pushed Islam out of the public sphere, characterizing it as traditional, conservative and oppressive (especially of women) as opposed to modern and progressive Kemalism.

Having clarified some of the theoretical issues in first two chapters and having outlined the trajectory of the Kemalist project of modernity in the previous chapter, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 get to the empirical heart of the dissertation, exploring the significance of activism and discourses of Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women in post-1980 Turkey. The substantive basis of my claims is based on an analysis of surveys of Turkish newspapers, the periodicals, documents, and pamphlets published by feminist groups as well as interviews conducted with feminist activists. Chapter 4 focuses on the activism and discourses of the various feminist groups that emerged in the mid-1980s, notably radical feminists and socialist feminists. It is argued that since the mid-1980s, feminist movements have emerged as sites where new forms of identity, theory, practice and community have become possible. Feminist activism has focused not only on contesting existing patriarchal norms and codes in society, but also on changing existing laws that reproduce gender inequality. This chapter explores women’s struggles to expand their citizenship rights in the 1980s and 1990s within the context of democratization process in Turkey when feminist groups made substantial gains: laws

criminalizing domestic violence, a new civil code and a more gender-sensitive criminal code. The chapter examines the strategies feminists employ to improve women's access to political institutions and to decision-making arenas. The possible European Union (EU) membership is an important theme around which different feminist and non-feminist groups have mobilized. Turkish governments' efforts to meet the EU guidelines have opened up spaces within the political process, which feminists have exploited and pushed for women-friendly civil and penal codes.

Chapters five and six focus on the discourses and activism of Kurdish feminists and Islamist women respectively, and the challenges they have posed to the Turkish feminist movement in the 1990s. Both Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have exposed the supposed unity of the feminist movement to be a fiction. They have argued that in their efforts to constitute women as a community, secular Turkish feminists universalized a particular identity for women. Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have exposed the exclusionary discourses and practices of secular Turkish feminists by pointing to their stance on the issues of nationalism and secularism. Indeed, while feminist groups in the late 1980s and early 1990s problematized the organicist, collectivist and gendered aspects of the Kemalist national narrative, they did not question its *secular* and *ethnic* dimensions. In this way, Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have posed an important challenge to the essentialist discourse within the feminist movement. Islamist women have pointed to the secularist bias of the movement. Kurdish feminists have highlighted the gender bias of the feminist movement as they have struggled not only to transform the unequal relations between men and women, but also to gain greater freedom for Kurds. At the same time, chapters 5 and 6 also brings out the

ways in which Kurdish feminists and some Islamist women challenge Kurdish national and Islamist movements respectively, contesting the identities and missions imposed on women by these male-dominated movements. One of arguments is that feminist politics in Turkey is weakened by the lack of strategic linkages among different groups of women. The challenges posed by Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have led to continuous (re)negotiations of, and contentious debates over, the meaning and significance of feminism and the appropriate sites and goals of feminist politics. Indeed, despite their differences, there has been ongoing struggle and negotiations among different women's groups, as each has reconstructed its identity with reference to an "other" group. The existence of these debates reveals that women's groups recognize the existence of multiple feminine identities competing in the public sphere. Chapters four through six thus identify feminist movements as sites of political struggle, empowerment and resistance as well as sites of identity/difference formation and negotiation.

I conclude the dissertation by drawing out some of the main issues and conclusions that reached in the course of this research. First, Kemalism needs to recognize and accommodate the differences that exist in society in order to be able to realize the democratic potential of its project of modernity. Second, the analysis in this dissertation reveals that taking up communitarian discourses as a discourse of emancipation both Kemalists, Islamists, Kurds as well as feminists inscribed oppression (based on gender, ethnicity, religion) on their own practices and discourses. Such essentialist invocations of community resulted in new inclusions/exclusions within feminist movements and discourses. Despite the problems associated with essentialism, it might be necessary to adopt some form of essentialism in order to reflect on "women" as

a category and to change the status quo, which oppresses and disempowers women. The adoption of “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 1988), especially by oppressed groups, may be necessary in order to be able to challenge dominant discourses. The creation of an essentialist identity, which unavoidably involves the creation of an undesirable “other”, can give a sense of dignity or self-esteem for groups of people who have been oppressed by “others”. It is important, then, to understand the context within which these movements are situated in order to be able to account for their strategic choices.

Third, in the process of articulation of a more inclusive political community feminists must acknowledge the differences that exist among women and develop strategies to reconcile this diversity. Collaborations among women may foster mutual understanding and respect and may lead to negotiation of differences among women. Lastly, I point to the significance of feminism to the prospects of democracy in Turkey. Women’s bodies and sexuality are viewed by different collectivist projects in Turkey as sites where communal identity/difference can be imagined and articulated. Feminist interventions are important since they undermine the collectivist discourses of Kemalism, political Islam and Kurdish nationalism, which tend to homogenize communities and assign women specific missions and identities. By emphasizing women’s difference, Turkish and Kurdish feminists and some Islamist women make visible the internal heterogeneity of these communities. They participate in the struggles over boundaries and identities, contesting the parameters of the community membership as defined by men. Thus, they contribute to enhance democracy in Turkey by helping to reconstruct a more inclusive political community.

On Method

As argued above, this dissertation works with the concept of new social movements to explore the crisis and prospects of modernity at a particular site. In this dissertation, I develop and present my arguments through a case study of Turkey. Yet, does the Western literature on social movements help account for the emergence and development of the social movements in a non-Western context, i.e. the post-1980 Turkey?

Recognition that the theoretical and conceptual tools of the dominant social movement literature are embedded within Western historical and national context(s) does *not* mean that they are of *no* utility and applicability in non-Western contexts. It does mean, however, that they are of “limited applicability” (Bendix 1964: 10). This argument is different from that which advocates “cultural essentialism” and “cultural relativism”. For the proponents of “cultural relativism”, concepts and theories are totally culture-specific and they cannot be employed outside the culture in which they were developed. This is a very totalizing and essentialist view. Turkey provides an example of the “hybridity” of cultural experience. The sharp distinctions drawn between “Western” and “non-Western” are not viable due to the cultural and political encounters between different cultures, the effects of colonization, cultural imperialism, and globalization. This thesis, then, embraces the argument of “limited applicability”, which emphasizes the need for a more *historically-informed* and *context-sensitive* analysis. This argument is skeptical of abstract and ahistorical conceptual and theoretical frameworks and/or generalizations which are assumed to be universally true and thus applicable across time and space. It is skeptical of an *uncritical* adaptation of theoretical approaches and/or concepts developed in one context (be it “Western” or “non-Western”) to another.

I carried out research for my dissertation in Turkey in 1998 and 1999. My dissertation research project had two stages. The first stage involved library and archival research for primary sources, that is women's networking publications, documents, pamphlets and journals, and newspaper articles, was carried out in İstanbul, Turkey in the summers of 1998 and 1999.⁹ The second stage involved interviews, conducted in the summer of 1999 in İstanbul, with the key movement activists, using a semi-structured format.¹⁰ On the whole, the interviews were quite flexible since the goal was to understand how the women involved perceived their identity and activism and what they thought about the issues related to family, femininity, veiling, Islam, secularism, nationalism, Kemalism, and the state. In other words, the aim was to allow women to tell their stories – why and how they participate and what they think about the main goals of the movement, challenges and opportunities women face in contemporary Turkey. Since

⁹ The feminist journal *Pazartesi*, first published in April 1995, had a circulation of 6000. There are several Islamist women's periodicals such as *Kadın ve Aile*, *Mektup*, and *Kadın Kimliği* – published by different religious sects. Here, the analysis of Islamist women's discourses is based mainly on the monthly *Kadın Kimliği*. The circulations of *Kadın ve Aile* and *Mektup*, both published since 1985, have been estimated at around 60,000 and 30,000 respectively (Acar 1995: 49). According to Demir (1998: 191), Islamist women's journals have an estimated circulation of 20,000. They are distributed and sold all across Turkey and in Europe. *Roza*, the first journal by Kurdish feminists in Turkey, was published between 1996 and 2000. *Jujin* was published between 1996 and 2000. They both had an estimated circulation of 1000-1500. Besides İstanbul these journals were distributed and sold in mostly Kurdish-populated southeastern region of Turkey. They were also sold in Europe (especially in Germany) where many Kurdish immigrants live. The circulations of Islamist women's journals are quite impressive as in Turkey only 7 percent of the population (approx. 4.9 million people) read newspapers. The circulation of one of the most popular Turkish newspapers *Hürriyet* is at around 530,000; the most popular Islamist daily *Zaman* has a circulation of 500,000. The circulations of popular monthly Turkish journals, such as *Aksiyon*, *Tempo* and *Ekonomist* have been estimated to range between 13,350 and 22,000 (see www.medyakafe.com).

¹⁰ The exception is my interview with Zülâl Kılıç, then chairwoman of the Association for Support and Training of Woman Candidates (KA-DER), which was conducted in May 9, 2001, İstanbul, Turkey.

the movement is composed of diverse groups I interviewed leading activists from each of the women's groups, in total seventeen women.¹¹ I selected the women to interview on the basis of a number of criteria, but mainly on recommendations by women who are themselves involved in feminist movements in Turkey. In addition, I also attended a number of meetings and workshops of a variety of women's groups through which I had the opportunity to observe the discussions and debate that took place among women and take notes. Much of the information gained through interviews was confirmed through archival research. It is important to note that, while all the women I interviewed were proud of their activism and of their participation in the feminist movement(s) – in fact some expressed an explicit desire to have their real names used – there were a few women who wanted me to disguise their real identities. In the dissertation, then, when I use full names I am using the person's real name. When I use first names only, those names are pseudonyms.

Interviews not only provided women with the opportunity to speak about their views on different issues, but also enabled me to see the ways different groups of women

¹¹ I originally arranged to interview at least twentyfive activists during my two-month stay in İstanbul, Turkey. Last two interviews with Turkish feminists had to be cancelled due to a powerful earthquake that hit the Marmara region in western Turkey. The center of the earthquake, which measured 7.4 on the Richter scale and lasted 45 seconds, was the city of İzmit, which is less than 60 miles from İstanbul. Also, I was not able to conduct interviews with Islamist women. A few women I contacted expressed their concerns and disappointments that they had been treated as "objects of academic inquiry", not as subjects, by secular academicians and that the views they had expressed in earlier interviews conducted by female (secular) academicians, journalists and secular feminists were either misinterpreted or put out of context (çarpıtıldı). Despite my relentless attempts to convince them that the interviews were not structured and that my aim was to allow them to tell their own stories, they told me that they decided not to be interviewed by academicians. The analysis of Islamist women's discourses is based on surveys of Islamist women's journals and on the writings published by Islamist women in Turkish newspapers and periodicals.

reproduce, challenge and subvert the visions and projects developed and imposed by the state and develop their own visions and projects. They also allowed me see how these women situate themselves in relation to other groups of women and how they negotiate their position in relation to “others”.

CHAPTER I: MODERNITY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRACY

Exploring the relationship between the crisis of modernity, contemporary social movements and democracy, this chapter makes three interrelated arguments. First, contemporary social movements are not only symptoms of the crisis of the project of modernity but also are spaces in which individuals and groups subvert and transform the modern project and seek to redefine modernity in their own terms. They both reflect the crisis of modernity and contain the yet-unfulfilled emancipatory potential of the “unfinished project” of modernity. Second, contemporary social movements are both the expression and the possible vehicle of democratization. They expose the problems of existing democratic arrangements, expand democratization beyond the institutions of the state into the intimate sphere, and democratize the existing public space(s) and create new (counter-) publics.

Nevertheless – and this is the third claim – it would be problematic to adopt a wholly celebratory attitude toward social movement politics as it may entail not only emancipation, empowerment and inclusion, but also domination, marginalization and exclusion. Indeed, it would be simplistic to assume that all social movements are inherently democratic as they internally show exclusionary and undemocratic tendencies. The analysis of the role of the Turkish feminist movement(s) brings this out nicely. Contemporary social movements can be both sites of empowerment and resistance as well as domination. This dissertation argues that contemporary social movements are *simultaneously* progressive and reactionary, democratic and undemocratic. It is

important, then, to explore the historically contingent ways in which contemporary social movements arise and operate as well as challenge and transform modernity.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the way modernity has been understood, interpreted and reconceptualized. The second section explores the crisis of the modern project, social movement politics and “alternative” and/or “multiple modernities” they reveal. The third examines the relationship between contemporary social movements and democracy, as this is developed especially in European New Social Movement theory (NSM). It uses feminist critiques of Habermas’s conceptualization of the public sphere to elaborate on this. It is within inclusive, heterogeneous public spheres that contemporary social movements publicize new issues and demands, claim new citizenship rights, monitor the state, and thus contribute to the democratization process. The last section develops a framework with which to study feminist movements, combining the insights of social movement theory and feminist scholarship.

1. Modernity: A Multidimensional Process

The term “modernity” has been defined and understood in different ways. Modernity is treated as a condition, a world-view, a historical period, a system, a process, an imaginary, a vision and a project. More recently, feminist, postmodern, poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques have exposed universalist, totalizing, linear, and West-centric narratives of modernity. While some scholars are rethinking modernity, highlighting the transformations modern societies are undergoing, others point to the emergence of a new global modernity in the current age of transnationalism and globalization. Still others

view Western modernity as one among different modernities, emphasizing the plurality of modernities and pointing to distinctive, locally imagined and experienced modernities.

While there is no consensus on its meaning, in most accounts, modernity is characterized as a break with tradition or break from an ancient regime. It is that which distinguishes the present from the past through a variety of major ruptures. Indeed, modernity or the modern world-view, which began to emerge in Europe from about the fifteenth century, broke away from the previous world-view based on Judeo-Christianity and the classical Greek understanding of the universe. One of the dimensions of modernity (cultural) involved the transition from the religious world-view to a secular world-view, dominated by materialist, individualist, and rationalist cultural values.

Yet, modernity has not been constituted (and re-constituted) by a single process. In fact, many contemporary theorists, like Stuart Hall (1996a: 3-18) and Anthony Giddens (1985), point to the multidimensionality of modernity, arguing that (Western) modernity was constituted by the articulation of a number of different processes: the political, the economic, the social and the cultural. The political process or aspect of modernity involves the rise of the modern, secular and, later, national state. The centralization of political power, the expansion of administrative rule, and the emergence of massed standing armies came to underpin the supremacy of the nation-state as one of the key institutional forms of modernity (Giddens 1985; Mann 1986; Tilly 1990; Held 1996). Of particular importance, modern states engaged in nation-building projects, imposing uniformity over ethnic and linguistic diversity through standardization of law and legal institutions, and extension and often administration of public education (see Chapter 2). This has often involved attempts to erase local diversity by imposing uniform

categories, assumptions, programs, and policies. By doing so, states homogenize, universalize and naturalize one local particularity over many others. National identity is promoted as the primary source of identification, devaluing all other loyalties and particularistic identities.

The economic dimension of modernity involved the development of the capitalist market economy based on private property. It is concerned with the spread of commerce and trade, the expansion of markets, the new division of labour, large-scale production, and the growth of material wealth and consumption. It also entailed the separation of domestic work from waged labour, that is the shift of production from domestic (household) to public sphere. The changing forms of economic relations generated new class relationships (Marx) and the social process of modernity involved the formation of classes, based on who own and control the means of production (capitalists) and those who only have their labour to sell (the landless, wage-earners or proletariat).

The social process of modernity entailed the emergence of a new sexual division of labour, new relations between men and women, organized around the shifting distinctions between work and home and the public and the private spheres. Socialist feminist scholars draw our attention to the changing gender relations with the advent of modernity, pointing to men's control over women's free domestic labour in home and the exploitation of women as cheap labour outside home. Similarly, several feminist scholars pointed to the omission of the family and changing roles of women in the domestic sphere from the mainstream debates on welfare regimes. Only very recently has there been some recognition on the part of a few scholars of the changing role of women and the growing diversity of family and household forms (Mahon 2001). Castells (1997: 138-

175) and Giddens (1998: 89-98) have recognized the importance of “the crisis of the patriarchal family”. They recognize that the recent changes in patterns of marriage, cohabitation, divorce, family size, women’s economic activity and types of families suggest that the domestic sphere remains in a transition period where diversity, rather than traditional family, is the norm.

The social aspect of modernity also involved the rise of a new realm distinct from the family as well as the public sphere – i.e. “the rise of the social” (Arendt 1958). While the private sphere was the domain of domesticity and intimacy (or the realm of “necessity”, as Arendt puts it), the public sphere was the place where social relations are constituted. The new realm of the social is the public domain of civil society, in which modern society is constructed and individuals and groups put their reason to public use (Habermas 1991) and challenge the power of the state (Cohen and Arato 1992; Keane 1988).¹ The concept of civil society designates a societal realm, a “third realm”, different both from the state and the economy (Cohen and Arato 1992: 18 and 346). It is in this realm that social movements are not only located, but also produced and reproduced. It is the realm where new structures of public discussion and political influence are created and recreated.

The cultural dimension of modernity involved a transition from a religious to a secular world-view, marked by a materialist, individualist and rationalist culture. Rooted in the Enlightenment, it involved the creation of new framework of ideas about human

¹ Arendt’s conceptualization of “the social” is different from Habermas’s formulation of the public sphere. For Arendt, the rise of the social undermines the necessary distinction between the private (the realm of necessity) and the public (the realm of freedom). While she points to the decline of the public realm with the rise of mass society, Habermas argues that the public sphere still contains the emancipatory potential of modernity.

beings, society, and nature which were marked by a belief in “progress” and by the application of reasoned, empirical knowledge (that is scientific knowledge free of religious orthodoxies). Science and technology, then, are the main vehicles with which human beings would achieve political, social and cultural progress. The cultural process also involved the principle of individualism – the idea that the individual is the starting point for all knowledge and action, and that individual reason cannot be subjected to any other higher authority. Thus, the cultural process of modernity was marked by a trust in the capacity and power of human reason, including the power of human self-transformation. It is also closely intertwined with the political dimension because the nation came to embody the modern ideas of autonomy, freedom and self-determination. Nation-states have emerged as vehicles of social and political transformation, and, thus, as embodiments of progress (see Chapter 2).

The cultural process that led to the formation of modernity also entailed the definition of new identities – the Orient and the Occident (Hall 1996b). As Edward Said (1978) argues, the West produced the Orient politically, ideologically, sociologically during the post-Enlightenment period. According to Said, the Orientalist discourse represents the world as divided according to a simple dichotomy: The West and the Rest. This discourse constructs both “the West” and “the Rest” as unified and homogeneous, ignoring or erasing internal differences (see Huntington 1993). While the West represents the developed, the civilized, the good and the desirable, the Rest are the excluded, conquered, colonized, ignorant, barbaric and primitive “other”, whose values are inferior to Western rationality and progress. As Hall (1996b: 225) reminds us the discourse of “the West and the Rest” was as constitutive of “the West and ‘modern societies’ as were

the secular state, capitalist economies, the modern class, race, and gender systems, and modern, individualist and secular culture". In other words, the discourse of "the West and the Rest" was not only necessary for the political, economic and social formation of the West but it was also essential to the formation of a distinct Western identity (Hall 1996b).

Hall's and Said's argument that the constitution of modernity involved an "othering" process is important to this study. "Others", created or constructed by projects of modernity, question, reject and sometimes revise these projects, and challenge and transform the identities imposed on them in the name of modernity. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, to create a new secular national identity the Turkish modernizing elites constructed the Islamic "Other". Similarly, as will be discussed in Chapters four through six, Turkish feminists, while creating a new identity for women, ended up excluding Islamist women and Kurdish feminist identities, constructing them as "Others".

Anthony Giddens (1985, 1990) identifies a plurality of dimensions of modernity. He argues that modernity entails four "institutional clusters" – capitalism, industrialism, surveillance and militarism – developing the links between these clusters and the social movements which react to them. The labour movement can be seen as a response to the growth of capitalism, ecological movements as a response to industrialism, peace movements as a response to the threat of a nuclear confrontation, and civil rights movements as a response to the expansion of state surveillance. Yet, in his analysis of modernity and its discontents, Giddens ignores both feminism and anti-colonial struggles.

Both Hall's and Giddens's discussions of modernity privilege Western institutions and experiences of modernity, which have been long used as a yardstick with which to measure non-Western societies. The notion that Western modernity is universal and that

there is only one path towards modernity has been recently challenged by those who point to the possibility of a plurality of distinct modernities. I will return to the discussion of “alternative” or “multiple modernities” later in this chapter.

Rather than focusing on the “institutional clusters” of modernity, scholars like Marshall Berman (1982) point to the contradictions, paradoxes, tensions, ambiguities, uncertainty, skepticism and constant change which characterize the “experience” of modernity. Following Marx’s argument that “all that is solid melts into air”, Berman emphasizes the dynamic and ever-changing nature of modernity: “modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity, and anguish” (Berman 1982: 15). Modernity, according to Berman, is not only about unity and universalism but also it is about change, ambivalence, and contradiction.²

Berman’s analysis is important as it focuses not only on the modernization projects developed and imposed by the state on society from above, but also on how individuals and groups in society become aware of the problems they face and the dilemmas they experience as a result of top-down, state-imposed modernity, gain agency, resist domination, and claim new rights (or access to existing ones). For Berman (1982: 16), modernism is a “variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them, to make their way through the maelstrom and make it their own”. Thus, Berman’s analysis of modernity focuses on the subject, which is often

² Zygmunt Bauman argues that the modern project in fact strives to eradicate this ambivalence, ambiguity and uncertainty by “suppress[ing] or eliminat[ing] everything that could not or would not be precisely defined” (1991: 7-8).

ignored by the discussions that pay attention only to the state and/or the economy, thus opening up more terrain for exploration of collective action.³ It also provides a framework to analyze how the project of modernity in Turkey, articulated by the Kemalist elite and imposed by the state, produced contradictions, tensions and resistances in women's (and men's) lives.

Western modernity is thus a dynamic, multidimensional process, with different yet closely interconnected dimensions. Yet, modernity is neither a closed nor a completed project. It is marked by ambivalence, contradictions, heterogeneity, and fragmentation as much as by unity. Modernity is a process, a vision, a project, not a finished achievement. The next section focuses on the transformations Western modernity has been undergoing in an increasingly globalized world.

2. Debating the Limits of Modernity: Modernity as an “Unfinished Project”

Nothing merely ends in history, no project is ever finished and done with. Clean borders between epochs are but projections of our relentless urge to separate the inseparable and order the flux (Zygmunt Bauman 1991: 270)

Many argue that we are living through a period of multidimensional and rapid transformation and that the development of information technology, the transformation of capitalism, the threat of ecological catastrophe, the crisis of the welfare state, the weakening of the nation-state, and the crisis of the patriarchal family have resulted in a new society. Indeed, Giddens (2000) calls the world we live in a “run-away” world,

³ Berman's analysis of modernity in the “Third World” suffers from Orientalism. He uses terms such as “Third world”, which homogenizes a historically, culturally, economically, and politically diverse groups of countries under one category.

marked by new risks and uncertainties (see also Beck 1994). Castells argues that in this information age we live in a “network society”, in which “information is the key ingredient of our social organization” (1996: 477) and social relations are being increasingly shaped by global “flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols” (1996: 411-412). While Castells (1996) argues that the new information technology has made information a key ingredient in the forces of production in this era of globalization, Arjun Appadurai (1996) observes that we live in an era of electronic mass media and migration which transforms existing worlds of communication and conduct. Similarly, Alberto Melucci and Alain Touraine argue that the emerging “complex” (Melucci) or “programmed” (Touraine) society is characterized by the production of symbolic goods and signs. If the modern society has been structured around a central conflict between instrumental rationality and communicative rationality, as Habermas suggests, the emerging network society, according to Castells (1996, 1997), is marked by a central conflict or opposition between “the Net and the Self”, between globalization and fragmentation, between abstract universalism and particularistic identities.

Indeed, the past two decades have witnessed increased economic and cultural flows (Appadurai 1996: 33) and heightened awareness of these flows across national and regional borders. The growing mobility of capital, commodities, ideas, images, cultural forms and symbols, technologies, information, and people (tourists, migrants, refugees) across regions has further increased global integration. Some argue that in this rapidly changing world national boundaries are becoming irrelevant as the state is no longer capable of imposing an organizing principle on society. Postcolonial scholars draw our

attention to borderlands, bordercrossings, de-territorialized identities and regions, rather than spatially bounded nation-states. They do not view global cultural flows as culturally homogenizing forces as images, ideas, lifestyles, cultural symbols are often received, consumed and also transformed locally in inventive ways (Appadurai 1996: 32). The local both shapes and is shaped by global flows. Both the local and the global are historical and political constructs and their boundaries are produced through continuous negotiations (Haugerud 2003).

Others focus on the blurring of the separation of distinct domains of the state and society, the state and economy, and the public and the private. Changing patterns of employment, production and consumption, changing lifestyles, changing gender identities and relations, the emergence of new social movement politics and “reflexive modernization” represent an intensification of the dynamics of “late modernity” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994; Giddens 1994). For Bauman (1992: 187), postmodernity is not a new era but a vantage point from which to critically assess modernity’s performance: “postmodernity may be conceived of as modernity conscious of its true nature – *modernity for itself*”. Others argue that these changes in fact represent a transition from a modern to a distinctive “postmodern” era, characterized by the loss of old certainties of the project of modernity (Lyotard 1984).

Indeed, the nature of the contemporary society (“modern” or “postmodern”) is one of the issues that lies at the heart of the debates concerning the crisis and the prospects of modernity. This sense of crisis has resulted in questioning not only the very nature and the boundaries of our communities, but also the boundaries of the political. Contemporary social movements, which are seen as symptoms of the crisis of the modern

project, have challenged the notion that territorial, national community constitutes the sole basis and the boundary of individual and collective identity. They have disrupted the myths of national homogeneity and communal unity by offering alternative identifications, a point that will be developed in Chapter 2. Indeed, the transformations that the state and society in Turkey (especially the crisis of the secular state) have been undergoing since the 1980s resulted in questions concerning the very nature of the community – as demonstrated in the many debates on Turkish nationalism, the Kurdish question, political Islam and covered Islamist women. In the Turkish context, then, the emergence of the new social movements can be understood as an attempt to redefine the political community.

The Crisis of the Project of Modernity and New Social Movements

While there are those who advocate abandoning the project of modernity and the grand narratives it generated, others, like Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens, attempt to overcome the crisis of modernity by modifying and extending the project of modernity.⁴ Habermas and Giddens agree that the legacy of modernity must be critiqued in the light of social and theoretical developments. Those who view modernity as an “unfinished project” share the view that new social movements are important, because they both reflect the crisis of modernity and contain the emancipatory potential of modernity.

⁴ For Lyotard (1984), the dark history of modernity (the Holocaust) put into question the promises of the meta-narratives of modernity. Individualism, secularism, nationalism, and science are no longer the certainties they once seemed. Lyotard is not the first scholar to recognize the dark side of modernity. Weber (1958: 181) emphasized the negative effects of bureaucratic rationality (“iron cage” of rationalist bureaucracy) on individual self-fulfillment and freedom. For Weber, modernity is marked by disenchantment as a result of processes of rationalization and secularization.

Habermas seeks to recover the emancipatory elements in theory and practice of modernity by launching a critique of modernity from within itself. He is critical of “orthodox Marxism” for ignoring the critical “self-reflection” of human agents, who are capable of shaping their own history by using that reflection.⁵ Habermas (1970) argues that in the modern era the sphere of politics is reduced to a technical decision-making process. He calls this extension of instrumental rationality to the political realm as “scientization of politics”.

Yet, Habermas does not equate instrumental rationality of modern technology and bureaucracy with reason as a whole. There is also another form of rationality inherent within modern society: communicative rationality. These two distinct rationalities inform two different realms of social life, *the system* and *the lifeworld*. The system corresponds to the economic and bureaucratic sphere of modern life responsible for the material reproduction of society, which is informed mainly by instrumental rationality. The lifeworld refers to those realms of social interaction, such as family, friends, and voluntary associations, which are governed by the norms of communicative action and oriented toward the development of shared values (Habermas 1984, 1987). The system’s instrumental rationality has the potential to hinder democratic, rational discourse in everyday life. Thus, Habermas aims to construct what he calls a theory of “communicative action”, one in which an ideal of egalitarian, rational, and undistorted interaction between social actors is promoted. Communicative rationality, embodying the Enlightenment ideals of equality and freedom, allows people to be free from instrumental

⁵ For comprehensive accounts of Habermas’ works see McCarthy (1978), Bernstein (1976) and Outhwaite (1994).

rationality, engaging freely in communicative action and achieving consensus in the public sphere on issues of common concern (Habermas 1984, 1987, 1991).

Habermas (1991) argues that a lively public sphere, which mediates between the system and lifeworld, allows public opinion to be formed through debate and discussion, where individuals can come together to debate and deliberate rationally on matters of social and political concern. New social movements constitute the main vehicle through which communicative rationality can be brought into the public sphere. New social movements, then, are agents of communicative rationality and of change in the public sphere. For Habermas, the intrusion of instrumental rationality of the system (the state and economy) into the lifeworld led to a crisis of legitimacy in late capitalist societies. “Colonization of the lifeworld” occurs when the system criteria associated with instrumental reason become part of everyday life, as the state and business intervene and control more of the lifeworld, undermining communicative interaction and, thus, the public sphere and democracy. Where the systemic forces have come to dominate the lifeworld, there are few possibilities for the development of democracy (Habermas 1987). Within this context, new social movements struggle to defend the lifeworld from “colonization” by money and bureaucratic power. They operate in a sub-institutional terrain located at “the seam between system and life world” to protect the lifeworld from the rationalistic logic of both the capitalist market and the administrative state (Habermas 1981b: 36).⁶

⁶ The distinction Habermas draws between system and lifeworld has been criticized for being too dualistic. For Kellner (2000: 272), for instance, while the state can be used progressively, the lifeworld can be the site of oppression due to existing inequalities.

In other words, these movements articulate democratic resistance to the systemic tendencies. As we shall see later in the chapter, for Habermas, new conflicts do not arise in the areas of material reproduction but in areas of “cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization” and are concerned with “the grammar forms of life” (1981b: 33). Issues such as abortion, women’s rights, and gay and lesbian protests bring to the fore issues of lifestyle, sexuality and family. The rise of new social movements also opens up new avenues for political participation.

If Habermas examines “the seam between system and life-world” in his analysis of new social movements, Giddens explores the relationship between an increasingly risk-producing, globalizing modernity and “life politics”. In contrast to his earlier work (1985), Giddens’s recent work (1994, 1998, 2000) discusses the shifting gender identities and relations and changing family forms and relations in relation to the crisis of the welfare state in the context of late modernity. For Giddens (1994), the demise of the Left and Right does not necessarily mean the demise of radical politics. Giddens identifies contemporary social movements, such as environmental movements, the peace movement, and the feminist movement, as sources of a new radical politics. While the radical politics of the past was “emancipatory”, which involved struggles for freedom from different forms of oppression, in late modernity, emancipatory politics has been accompanied by what Giddens calls “life politics”.

Giddens tries to answer the question of why and how cultural change comes about in a late modern context in his analysis of social movements and “life politics”. The most important dimension of late modernity (cultural dimension) is the penetration of “reflexivity” into the reproduction of personal and institutional life. In late modernity the

line between public and private issues is blurred, as the questions of personal life are increasingly politicized. Lifestyle issues become dominant and conflicts arise in the areas of private life (Giddens 1991: 226). Thus, Giddens views the emergence of new social movements, centered on “life politics”, as an important feature of late modern societies. Contemporary social movements have moved beyond the concerns of emancipatory politics. “Life politics” is a politics of choice, it is “a politics of self-actualization in a reflexively ordered environment” (Giddens 1991: 214). Life politics is a politics of cultural identity and self-actualization. It allows the “return of the repressed”, as the issues relating to the private realm, such as sexuality, reproduction, and health, become part of public discourse.

For Giddens, one of the most important features of this late modern era is “reflexive modernization”, that is, the increasing capacity of self-conscious individuals and groups to critically apply knowledge to themselves and their societies (Beck, Giddens, Lash 1994). As globalization extends and an information society develops, traditions are rethought and problematized. Globalization is linked to the emergence of a post-traditional social order, in which traditions become more open to interrogation and change since globalization allows new connections between the global and the local to develop (Giddens 1990). In a late modern world traditions can no longer be taken for granted because they compete with other discourses in a pluralistic environment.

The analysis offered by Habermas and Giddens is useful as they both discuss the relationship between the crisis of modernity and emergence of social movement politics. They argue that new social movements contain the emancipatory potential of “the unfinished project” of modernity. Yet, while Habermas and Giddens view contemporary

social movements in Europe and North America as integral features of late modern societies, they do not pay sufficient attention to the diverse movements that emerged in non-Western societies in response to the penetrations and transformations shaped by globalization (see, for instance, Castells 1997). Furthermore, neither takes into account the ways in which encounters with different societies and cultures through colonization contributed to the constitution of Western modernity. They fail to confront the issue of the extent to which there are different paths to modernity in different cultures. In this respect, Berman's analysis of modernity offers a more insightful perspective on different experiences of modernity. For Berman (1982: 16), modernity is neither modernization (socioeconomic process) nor modernism (cultural visions and values) but it involves both aspects. Differentiating modernization from modernism, many Western scholars focused only on socio-economic transformation (modernization) in non-Western societies, assuming the incapability of these societies to formulate distinct cultural visions of their own. Berman's analysis, then, not only opens up more terrain for exploration of collective action, but also allows for the possibility of more locally imagined and experienced modernities. The next section examines the recent debates around the issue of "multiple" or "alternative" modernities.⁷

On "Alternative", "Multiple", "Non-Western" Modernities

The crisis of modernity also involves a crisis of the long-accepted way of "knowing" society. Indeed, the foundational principles of Enlightenment philosophy – such as

⁷ For these debates see two special issues of *Daedalus*, titled "Early Modernities" (Summer 1998) and "Multiple Modernities" (Winter 2000), and the special issue of *Public Culture* on "Alternative Modernities" (vol 11, no.1) – later published as a book, see Gaonkar (2001).

universality, rationality and objectivity – which inform the dominant positivist stance, have been subjected to much ontological and epistemological criticism.⁸ Drawing mostly on Michel Foucault's arguments on power/knowledge (1980), postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial and feminist scholars not only undermined the faith in positivism and science, but also challenged such "universal" narratives of Western modernity as progress and rationality. The task of sociology has shifted from "legislating" a standardized common culture, to "interpreting" different cultures and facilitating understanding and communication between diverse communities and traditions (Bauman 1991: 42). Postcolonial scholars, like Said, further exposed the Eurocentrism of the academia and the power of colonialism and Western knowledge. They pay more attention to local diversity and resistance, displacement and mobility, rejecting universalizing paradigms and calling for contextually grounded or situated knowledge.

Problematizing the power of Western knowledge and revaluing alternative experiences and ways of knowing have led some scholars to raise the question of the possibility of different paths to "civilization". As argued earlier, modernity has been long seen as something which has an origin, and which has spread from that point of origin (the West) to different parts of the world (the Rest) through commerce, colonialism, the

⁸ Drawing from the works of "conventionalist" (Keat and Urry 1982) philosophers of science, such as Thomas Kuhn (1970), postmodern, poststructuralist, postcolonial and some feminist scholars (Hekman 1990) reject such distinctions as materialism/idealism, fact/value and object/subject. They reject not only the contention that natural science provides the model for social scientific methodology but also the positivist claim of a one-to-one correspondence between theories and reality, claiming that the relation between knowledge and reality is one of constitution, not of correspondence (Sunar 1999). This is significant because if there is no objective reality "out there" and if there is no subject of history and no ground, which can serve as a guide to strategic action for bringing about an alternative order, then there is no longer any basis for believing in historical progress and emancipatory politics.

global media and migration.⁹ This is the narrative of linear progress that occupies the center of “modernization” and “development” literature. Today, however, some scholars suggest that we adopt a view which sees modernity not as emanating from one center but rather as something interactive and transcultural. They call for the recognition of distinctive modernities in other historical periods and other parts of the globe. Others highlight the way the encounter with modernity is experienced, articulated and appropriated differently at different sites (including the West). Exploring the forms modernity takes in different contexts leaves open the possibility that new forms may be emerging.

The idea of *alternative modernities* suggests that modernity always unfolds within specific cultures and different starting points to modernity lead to different outcomes.¹⁰ Thus, modernity is not a single, universal, homogeneous thing. Yet, at the same time, *alternative modernities* are necessarily related to the West. Also, implicit in the idea of *alternative modernities* is the issue of temporality. The idea of an alternative modernity disguises the assumptions about the linear conception of time or the temporal difference between the original (i.e. Western modernity) and its “alternative”¹¹, implying that

⁹ The special issues of *Daedalus*, titled “Early Modernities” (Summer 1998) and “Multiple Modernities” (Winter 2000) challenge this prevailing assumption about modernity as a Western invention. Contributors to the Winter 2000 issue explore the meaning of modernity in different contexts such as communist Russia, India, the Muslim world, Latin America, China and East Asia, and the United States.

¹⁰ For more on *alternative modernities* see Appadurai 1996 and Gaonkar (ed.) 2001. Appadurai is one of the scholars of modernity who introduced the term into the literature. The contributors to the edited book by Gaonkar both explore the way modernity unfolded in a variety of contexts such as China, Russia, India, Trinidad and Mexico, and focus on more theoretical issues, such as the tension between cosmopolitanism and diversity.

¹¹ Anderson’s study on nationalism focuses on the implantation of nationalism in non-Western contexts (1991). His analysis emphasizes the processes of temporal succession, as he insists on the originality and primacy of nationalisms in the Americas, the linguistic

Western modernity is primary and original and will always remain so, while the derivatives or imitations can only appeal to cultural difference/authenticity.¹² For instance, Eisenstadt (2000: 2-3) argues that “[w]estern patterns of modernity are not the only ‘authentic’ modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others”. This raises the question of how other modernities compare, derive or deviate from various European models. Nilüfer Göle (2000a) argues that even though Islamism rejects certain principles that underpin Western modernity, Islamist movements do in fact constitute a critical reevaluation of modernity. They attempt to interpret and appropriate modernity in their own terms. It is, then, more useful to focus on how similar global events and common geopolitical, economic, environmental, and institutional shifts produce differences, rather than describing the postcolonial as a site of implantation of Western modernity.

The term *multiple modernities* is a broad conceptual category which seeks to dismantle Eurocentric models for modernity, assuming multiplicity of modernity. It refers to a world with both culturally diverse and universal features. According to Tu Weiming (2000), the success of Confucian East Asia in becoming fully modernized without being fully Westernized demonstrates that modernization is not Westernization or Americanization and modernization may assume different cultural forms. Of greater relevance to this dissertation, Göle (2000a: 92-93) argues that while Islamism tries to appropriate Western modernity in its own terms, it can also be read as a

nationalisms of Europe in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the official nationalisms of the late twentieth century, and the derivative, “modular” status of all those modernizing societies in Asia and Africa that have followed these models.

¹² Indeed, proponents of “alternative modernities” have appealed to forms of identity-based anti-colonial nationalism as examples of “difference” resting on the claims of cultural authenticity (see Chatterjee 1986, 1991).

divergence from the basic premises of Western modernity, namely, the idea of future-oriented progress and individual emancipation. ... Islamism carries the ideal of changing the society as a whole – of Islamization of all spheres of life, ranging from faith to gender relations, private/public boundaries, scientific knowledge, and governance principles. Furthermore, it rests on the historical memory of a civilizational antagonism. As it seeks past-oriented change, hierarchical conceptions of gender relations, and submission of self to religious precepts, Islamism rejects the dominant features of modernity.

Islam embodies values different than the Western ones. Modernization, then, is both a response to the West and as a process that is unique in its own right. It is not an imitation of the West but a conscious process of reflexive construction of society, which draws upon and challenges different sources and narratives (such as the narratives of Western modernity) to develop the institutions suitable for particular societies.

For Göle, the term *alternative modernities* is West-centric as it takes the Western experience of modernity as a reference point. It is important, however, to remove the West from the center of any analysis of non-Western modernities. The term is also problematic as it can imply “a utopian attitude coupled with claims for authenticity and privilege, holistic systemic changes and authoritarian politics” (Göle 2000b: 43). For Göle, the emphasis on *multiple modernities* results in cultural relativism, “bring[ing] forth a relativistic conception between different experiences” (2000b: 42). While the conceptualization of *local modernity* emphasizes local, hybrid experiences of modernity, historicizing particularistic, “multivocal” aspects of modernity, the distinction between local/global implies power relations of domination: “[l]abeling an experience, an attitude, a social practice as local means attaching to it a place and limiting its meaning to the particular as opposed to the universal” (Göle 2000b: 44). Therefore, Göle (1999, 2000b)

argues for the term “non-Western modernity” (*Batı-dışı modernlik*) to better understand the visions and experiences of non-Western societies with modernity. The term *non-Western modernities* enables us to analyze non-Western modernities “in terms of coeval time and not in sequential chronology”.¹³

The term *non-Western modernities* is useful as it raises and attempts to answer the question of whether modernity can be formed by different structures, forces, and agents in different cultural contexts. Yet, as Göle (2000b: 44) herself argues, the concept suffers from an important limitation: it assumes “the wholeness of the concept of ‘Western modernity’” without questioning it. What is “imagined” as “Western modernity” should also be problematized because, these imaginations and representations, which might privilege certain aspects and norms of Western modernity over others, play a defining role in introduction of certain projects to “catch up” with the West. Meltem Ahıska (2003: 353) uses the term “*Occidentalism* to conceptualize how the West figures in the temporal/spatial imagining of modern Turkish identity.” She argues that in theorizing modernity in a non-Western context, such as Turkey, “we can neither unproblematically herald the Western model nor dismiss the fantasy of ‘the West’ that informs the hegemonic national imaginary” (2003: 353).

The term “non-Western modernity” also has another drawback. It places non-Western countries within a single category, ignoring differences among them. Göle (2000b: 45) recognizes the problem:

¹³ Non-Western societies have often been studied in terms of the “time lag” they have with Western societies, as the notion of evolutionary time or “the denial of coeval time” underpins the discourse of modernity (Göle 2000b: 46-49). Kandiyoti (2002: 4) has recently argued that “the binaries of ‘global’ and ‘local’ now displace ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’, substituting a spatial metaphor and hierarchy for the temporal hierarchy implicit in modernization theory”.

the attempt to reread modernity from the angle of non-Western countries raises the question whether we can refer to a shared experience, a similitude among these experiences which would justify such a label. We have to compare and contrast these experiences in order to distill some common aspects of their practice of modernity.

In other words, in order to decenter the West, an attempt must be made to “read non-Western societies not in the mirror of the Western influence of modernity” (*ibid.*) but in relation to one another. Rather than taking the West as a reference point, experiences and practices of non-Western societies must be contrasted with each other to identify both shared experiences and practices and different aspects of their experiences with modernity. Such a comparative analysis among non-Western societies leaves room for the possibility of moving beyond the dichotomy of “Western modernity” versus “non-Western modernity”.

This new thinking on “alternative”, “multiple” or “non-Western” modernities has important implications for both scholarly understanding and public discourse as it helps unsettle modernization theory and practice as well as theories of cultural authenticity. It offers alternatives to hegemonic Orientalist discourses such as Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis (1993). In the post-9/11 environment, not only imagining alternative modernities, but also producing knowledge of whether and how post-colonial societies have articulated their own visions of modernity, can be seen as acts of resistance. This new thinking on multiple modernities, then, emphasizes not only plurality of modernity, but also resistance and thus agency. It draws our attention to the fact that because different societies appropriate modernity differently, there is an even greater need for the study of specific geographies, histories and languages to better account for the specific social and cultural processes that modernizing societies are

undergoing (Appadurai 1996: 17). This dissertation aims to contribute to the existing discussions of modernities by exploring the gendered nature of competing and/or intersecting visions and projects of modernity in Turkey. Chapter 3 focuses on the modernization project of the Kemalist elite and their representations of being “Western” and, hence, “modern”.

3. Modernity, Contemporary Social Movements, and Democracy

Contemporary forms of collective action act as “revealers”, exposing that which is hidden or excluded by the decision-making process (Melucci 1992: 68).

Scholars of new social movements make four interrelated arguments. First, contemporary social movements are symptoms of the crisis of modernity; they expose the homogenizing and universalizing aspects of (Western) modernity. Second, contemporary social movements contain the emancipatory promise of the “unfinished project” of modernity (Habermas 1981a), emphasizing the centrality of contemporary social movements as main *agents* of social and political change in late modernity (Touraine 1981, 1988; Melucci 1989, 1996; Giddens 1991). They are potential *agents* of democratization both in long established and emerging democracies. They help realize the democratic potential modernity contains as they both advocate more participatory forms of democracy and create new counter-publics (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Fraser 1992). Third, contemporary social movements are sites for identity formation; they are concerned with the control of symbolic production and the constitution of new identities

(Melucci 1996; Castells 1997; Giddens 1991). Fourth, some scholars, like Göle, view contemporary social movements as sites of possible new modernities.

Two competing theoretical perspectives – North American *resource mobilization* (RM) and European *new social movement* (NSM) theory – have dominated the study of social movements during the last three decades (Cohen 1985; Canel 1992).¹⁴ The RM approach or “strategy paradigm” (Cohen 1985) emerged as a response to the classical approaches to collective behaviour, which viewed protests as irrational responses of frustrated and discontented individuals to social change. RM theorists break with the classical tradition by focusing on the organizational dynamics of collective action and by recognizing collective action as a rational pursuit of interests by social actors (McCarthy and Zald 1977). The RM approach stresses the importance of social movement organizations (SMOs), shared interests, availability of resources, external sponsorship (*ibid.*), and changes in the political context or “political opportunity structures” (Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1994; Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam et al. 1996) to account for the formation and mobilization of social movements.¹⁵ The *political opportunity structure* (POS) refers

¹⁴ Social movement theory has been criticized for its exclusive emphasis on the processes at the national level (Walker 1994; Magnusson 1994). Thus far, however, there have been only a few attempts to theorize social movements at the global level (Castells 1997). Postmodern scholars, like Magnusson (1994) and Walker (1994), call for “decentering the state as the object of political analysis”. Yet, their postmodern anti-foundationalist stance prevents them from offering any theoretical framework to guide analyses of social movements (Melucci 1996: 204). The postmodern perspective is problematic as it not only decenters the state but also the “subject” and fails to provide any stance from which to engage in critique, emptying politics of any significance and, thus, justifying the status quo. Indeed, Habermas (1981a) refers to postmodern scholars as new “conservatives”.

¹⁵ The RM approach, in its original formulation – now called the *entrepreneurial mobilization* model (Jenkins 1983: 527) – has not paid sufficient attention to the political context in which social movements are embedded. The *political process model*, a variant of RM, focuses on the relationship between social movements and the political context,

to those dimensions of the political environment that either encourage or obstruct collective action (Tarrow 1994: 85). State structures create stable opportunities and, thus, facilitate social movement formation but “it is changing opportunities within states that provide the openings that resource-poor actors can use to create new movements” (*ibid.* 18). Such changes in the political environment as shifts in political alignments, conflict within and among elites, and presence or absence of allies open or close opportunities for social movements over time (Tarrow 1994; Kriesi et al. 1995).

More recently, there has been an emphasis on the role of culture in the emergence and development of social movements. The RM approach has expanded to include ideational factors through the introduction of the concept of “framing” (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1992: 136-137). “Collective action frames” are sets of beliefs and meanings attributed to individual and collective experiences, social situations and events. They enable movements to construct shared understandings, motives, and identities which encourage and legitimate collective action. In their framing efforts movement organizers both draw on and modify existing cultural symbols and meanings – sometimes produce new meanings and symbols – and turn them into “collective action frames”, through which movement activists perceive their political environment (Tarrow 1992: 190-192).

Social movement formation, then, is a “product of people seizing and making opportunities” (Tarrow 1994: 81). Feminist movements, for instance, draw on existing gender discourses in order to construct collective action frames and to mobilize support for their goals. Consequently, the existing gender discourse forms part of the “political

placing special emphasis on the “political opportunity structures” to account for the rise and/or decline of social movements (Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1994).

opportunity structure” in which feminist activism emerges. This occurs when there are contradictions between the prevailing gender discourse and the realities of daily life that women experience. As we shall see, in Turkey, feminist movements exploited the contradictions between the official Kemalist discourse stressing gender equality in the public sphere and the daily realities of women’s subordination in their homes.

While useful, the framing literature looks only at the strategic dimensions of the framing processes that are relevant for the mobilization of collective action, ignoring the formation of collective identities. Focusing on the way that frames are constructed at the organizational level, it tends to miss the way that collective identity develops in “submerged networks” (Melucci 1989) in the process of interaction with wider social and political processes, structures and relations of power, existing hegemonic ideologies, which shape both the formation of collective identities and the framing processes (Melucci 1996: 68-86). Despite its limitations, the RM approach offers two conceptual tools which will be employed to account for the emergence of movements at particular points in time: “political opportunity structure” and “framing”.

While the RM approach is primarily preoccupied with *how* social movements form and engage in collective action and the “political process model” is mainly concerned with the *when* of the social movements (Tarrow 1994: 17), NSM theory focuses on *why* specific forms of collective action have emerged in Western societies during the late twentieth century (Melucci 1989). My understanding of contemporary social movements draws mostly on the works of NSM theorists, like Alberto Melucci, who argue that “new social movements” constitute a break with the traditional collective actors, specifically the labour movement, since they have loose and decentralized

organizational forms, and raise issues related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, the environment, and peace (Melucci 1989, 1996; Giddens 1991).¹⁶

NSM theory or “identity-oriented paradigm” (Cohen 1985) explains the emergence and significance of “new social movements” with reference to broad structural transformations, which have created new sources of conflict (see Touraine 1981, 1988, 1995; Habermas 1981b; Offe 1985; Melucci 1989, 1996; Young 1990; Giddens 1991; Castells 1997). Habermas argues that the intrusion of instrumental rationality of the system (the state and economy) into the lifeworld led to a crisis of legitimacy in late capitalist societies. New social movements have emerged to defend the lifeworld from colonization by money and bureaucratic power (Habermas 1981b). Alain Touraine (1981, 1985) relates the rise of new social movements to the emergence of a new “societal type”, “programmed society” which is characterized by increased levels of reflexivity. While the central conflict in industrial societies revolved around material production, in “programmed societies” the central conflict is over “the production of symbolic goods” (1985: 774) or the control of “historicity” (1981: 9).¹⁷ Similarly, for

¹⁶ When discussing his frustration with the controversy the term “new social movements” produced, Alberto Melucci (1994: 101-130; 1996: 5-6) argued that in their attempts to determine whether a particular movement is “new” or “old”, both the critics and the supporters of the “newness” of the “new movements” commit the same “epistemological mistake”: they consider contemporary collective phenomena to constitute “unitary empirical objects” and on the basis of this assumption, the supporters seek to define their newness, the critics deny or question it. For Melucci (1996: 5-6), “newness” is a relative concept and contemporary movements are far from unitary phenomena. Contemporary social movements, in their empirical unity, are made up of a variety of components.

¹⁷ *Historicity*, the key concept in Touraine’s theory, refers to the society’s capacity to “act upon itself” to transform the dominant cultural model. Social movements are the main forces fighting against each other to control the production of society by itself (1981: 29). While other theorists recognize plurality of social movements in late modernity, Touraine (1981: 94-96) argues that in any “societal type” there is one central conflict and a particular type of social movement, which would bring about social change.

Melucci (1996: 89-97), one of the transformations in the processes that guide “complex societies” is the replacement of material production with the production of signs and social meanings. NSM theorists, then, view new social movements as heralds of a new society called “programmed” (Touraine 1981) or “complex” (Melucci 1996).

Contemporary social movements reflect the complex processes of inclusion and exclusion that have existed in our societies. Movements such as civil rights, feminist, environmentalist, gay and lesbian liberation, challenge the ideal of universalism embedded in the project of modernity by bringing into light long denied identities, hidden inequalities and marginalized issues (Young 1990; Melucci 1989, 1996). They seek “not only various instrumental goals but the affirmation of excluded identities as publicly good and politically salient” (Calhoun 1994: 4). For long marginalized and oppressed groups, the construction of “resistant” or “project” identities¹⁸ constitutes a key component of a struggle to transform existing hierarchical power relations and inequalities (based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age and religious convictions) in society. Indeed, struggles over meanings and identity/difference are viewed as one of the key features of late modern societies. New conflicts do not arise in the areas of material reproduction but in the areas of cultural reproduction, social integration (Habermas 1981b) and private life (Giddens 1991: 226). Social movements in late modernity are not preoccupied with “the production and distribution of material goods and resources” (Melucci 1989: 205) but with the control of symbolic production, the creation of social

¹⁸ Castells (1997: 8-10) makes a useful distinction between three forms of identity building processes: “legitimizing identity” “rationalizes the sources of structural domination”; “resistance identity” forms collective resistance against principles permeating the institutions of society; and “project identity” redefines the identity of marginalized groups as they seek to transform unequal power relations in societies.

meanings, and the constitution of new identities¹⁹ (Melucci 1989: 205; Cohen 1985; Touraine 1985; Castells 1997; Giddens 1991). They are “symbolic challenges” which seek to overturn the dominant cultural codes of everyday life (Melucci 1996).

NSM theorists, then, point to the non-political stakes and targets of contemporary social movements.²⁰ For them, the field of collective action has shifted from the political and economic spheres to the cultural realm. Contemporary movements are concerned with “the need for self-realization of everyday life” (Melucci 1989: 23). They are involved in “life politics”, “a politics of self-actualization” (Giddens 1991: 214). Yet, by bringing issues related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, the environment, and peace to the public sphere, contemporary social movements not only expand the boundaries of the political but also push for political, social, economic and cultural transformations. Struggles of contemporary movements over meanings, representations and identities are closely intertwined with their struggles for the expansion of economic and political rights. As Nancy Fraser (1997, 2000) argues, social movements are engaged in both “the politics of recognition” and “the politics of redistribution”. Struggles waged by contemporary movements contest the existing meanings and practices of citizenship and seek to expand “citizenship from below” (Turner 1992). Social movements constitute a

¹⁹ According to Melucci, collective identity as an “interactive and shared definition”, constructed through the processes of interaction, negotiation, conflict and compromise among a variety of different actors within a field of constraints and possibilities (1996: 70). Melucci suggests using a new term, “identization”, to convey the increasingly “self-reflective and constructed manner in which contemporary collective actors define themselves” (1996: 77).

²⁰ For Melucci (1996: 6), it is imperative to move beyond those approaches, which place contemporary collective phenomena on an “exclusively political level”. Such approaches, he argues, ignore the non-political stakes of contemporary movements by their political reductionism (1996: 197-204). The “newness” of new social movements seems to signify difference from interest groups and especially from the labour movement.

key site where citizens get together to articulate and claim new rights or struggle to protect or expand formerly gained rights. The Turkish conception of citizenship, for instance, has been contested since the mid-1980s by the struggles waged by social movements for recognition and inclusion.

Much of the existing literature on modernity and NSMs emphasizes that these movements offer the best means of realizing “bottom-up decision-making” and democratizing “late modern” or “complex” societies. Some theorists identify civil society as both the terrain and target of collective action (Touraine 1981; Keane 1988; Cohen and Arato 1992: 548-563). For them, contemporary social movements not only expand and democratize the existing public space(s) in civil society but also create “subaltern counterpublics” (Fraser 1992: 123) or “enclaves of oppositional discourse” (Mansbridge 1996: 58). Within these alternative counterpublics, through articulating and circulating alternative discourses, social movements reconstruct new identities, challenge the dominant cultural codes and norms in society, and transform unequal power relations.

Some of the literature on democratic transitions also locates social movements in the terrain of civil society; yet they also emphasize the critical role they played in recent democratic transitions, especially in Latin America and Eastern Europe (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Oberschall 1996; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998). Common to all these accounts is the stress on the democratizing influence of contemporary social movements on both existing and emerging democracies. Social movements, whether in Western liberal democracies or in democratizing states in Latin America, Eastern and Central Europe, Africa, and Asia, demand to take part in the realization of democratic promises. Feminist scholars have analyzed the role women and women’s movements played in the

democratization process from a gendered perspective (Alvarez 1994; Basu 1995; Jaquette 1994; Hensman 1996; Waylen 1996; Jaquette and Wolchik 1998). Feminist movements contribute to democratic changes both at the level of civil society and the state, exposing to public debate processes of inclusion and exclusion both within the state and in society. They target the everyday life, expanding democratization beyond the institutions of the state into the intimate sphere. For many women, democratization refers to the democratization of everyday life, autonomy, and freedom from oppression and violence.

Others locate contemporary social movements in an intermediary space between civil society and the state. Melucci (1985: 815) refers to an “intermediate public space” where social movements make society hear their messages and where these messages enter the process of political decision-making. Intermediary public arenas provide a site for contemporary movements to publicize the basic problems of complex societies and to express the concerns and demands of civil society (Melucci 1989: 227-228; 1996: 218-221). As noted earlier, Habermas argues that in late capitalist societies, new social movements operate in a terrain located at “the seam between system and life world” to protect the lifeworld from “colonization” by bureaucratic and economic power (1981b: 36). While for Habermas, new social movements, with the exception of the feminist movement, are engaged in a defensive project of protecting the lifeworld from economic or administrative “colonization”, for Cohen and Arato (1992: 523-563), contemporary movements adopt a “dualistic strategy” or “dual politics” of targeting both the state and

the economy for inclusion (offensive strategy) and the institutions of civil society with the aim of preserving and democratizing them (defensive strategy).²¹

As Habermas (1991) argues, public discourse in an inclusive and free public sphere is a critical component of an established and functioning democracy. The public sphere, which emerged in the context of the rise of the modern state and the development of capitalist economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is the place where a reasoned deliberation and consensus between equal and free citizens over matters of common political concern takes place. It is the sphere where citizens overcome private interests and concerns, get together, deliberate and reach a consensus about matters of common concern. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas provides a historical-sociological account of the emergence, transformation and the decline of the bourgeois public sphere.²² He (1991: 27) conceives the public sphere

above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; ... regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically

²¹ For Habermas (1981), new social movements are not only defensive resistances against systemic encroachments but also offensive, particularist resistances due to their concern with identities and alternative values and norms. The feminist movement, for Habermas, differs from other social movements because it is defensive as well as offensive. In addition to its particularistic identity-related concerns, it also has the universalist goal of political inclusion (see Cohen and Arato 528-532).

²² Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which has generated lively discussions of the nature of the public sphere and debates over democracy, was originally published in 1962 and translated into English in 1989. A summary of the argument presented in this book can be found in Habermas's short encyclopaedia article, published originally in 1964, which was reprinted in fall 1974 in *New German Critique* 1(3): 49-55. In the first part of the book, Habermas explores the emergence of the public sphere from the literary salons, voluntary societies, coffee houses and other groups occupying the space between the state and emerging economy in the eighteenth century, focusing on the developments in Britain, France and Germany. In the second half, he traces the degeneration and decline of the public sphere in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's use of their reason (*öffentliches Raisonement*).

The public sphere is a space of institutions and practices which “mediates between society and the state” (1974: 49-50). It is an arena where individuals get together to discuss their common public affairs and to freely organize outside and against state authority. It is a space in which citizens could direct the actions of state and market through a process of collective will-formation guided through open, critical public discussion of matters of collective concern.²³ The public sphere, then, serves an important function: it is an arena where people monitor and critique the state through engaging in critical discussion, forming public opinion and, thus, taking part in the process of shaping social and political institutions.²⁴ Indeed, located in the public sphere contemporary social movements mediate between civil society and institutional politics.²⁵ They overcome the limitations of the existing democratic process through, what Keane (1988) calls, a process of “double democratization”, that is the simultaneous democratization of

²³ Kellner (2000) argues that Habermas fails to envisage how media and technology could lead to an expansion of new and more democratic public spheres. For Kellner (2000: 279), the public sphere must be redefined to comprise new sites of information, discussion, contestation, political struggle and organization that include the broadcasting media and new cyberspaces as well as the face-to-face interactions of everyday life. The rise of the Internet expands the realm for democratic participation and debate, creating new public spaces for political intervention. For the role of information technology in the global economy and rise of the “network society” see Castells (1996, 1997, 1998).

²⁴ Here the “public” realm is the realm of political community based on active citizenship – that is active participation in collective decision making through deliberation within a framework of equality. For a similar understanding of the political and a similar conceptualization of the “public space” see Hannah Arendt (1958).

²⁵ As will be discussed below, Habermas's account of the bourgeois public sphere has been criticized for its lack of attention to issues such as nationalism, gender, and religion. For critical engagements with Habermas's account see Calhoun (1992a).

the state and civil society.²⁶ Contemporary movements not only “democratize everyday life within civil society”, but also expose the problems associated with the existing liberal democracies. They contest the existing notion of the political and the nature of democratic politics and seek to redefine the boundaries of the political arena to make decision-making processes and structures, and consequently policy making, more democratic and inclusive. According to Melucci:

The problem raised by contemporary social movements ... concerns a redefinition of what democracy is, can be, and ought to be in a world where information becomes the central resource and where individuals and groups are offered the possibility of themselves constructing their identities instead of remaining simply recipients assigned them from the outside (1996: 203).

For Melucci (1996: 221), the public sphere is essentially a conflictual arena and “whenever a new issue or dilemma is made visible through collective action, there appears a chance for redefining the public space. This happened when, for example, the gender issue was raised and openly addressed; in time, not only political life emerged affected but everyday lives, mental codes, and interpersonal relationships underwent transformations” (1996: 177). Indeed, feminist movements contribute to the process of democratization both at the level of civil society and the state. As noted earlier, they challenge the boundaries of the political arena by expanding democratization beyond the

²⁶ Similarly, David Held (1996: 316) views democratization as a “double-sided” process, which involves both “the re-form of state power” and “the restructuring of civil society”. For Held, a project to further democratize actually existing democracies would be incomplete if the process of globalization is not taken into consideration (1996: 335-362; 1998: 11-27). He offers a model of “cosmopolitan democracy” to deepen and extend democracy across national, regional and global levels.

institutions of the state into the intimate sphere. They also create and expand independent public spheres throughout society to render new issues visible in public debate.

It would be problematic, however, to adopt a wholly celebratory attitude toward social movement politics. As Cohen and Arato (1992: 565-566) argues “social movements are not always inherently democratic, and they tend to bypass the existing political channels for exerting influence”. Social movements may indeed reproduce the inclusions and exclusions that they are seeking to expose in the first place (Phillips 1996; Castells 1997). Indeed, my research reveals that the Turkish feminist movement shows exclusionary tendencies. Rather than idealizing social movements, then, we should move beyond the dichotomies often employed to characterize social movements such as progressive/reactionary. Contemporary social movements are *simultaneously* democratic and undemocratic, emancipatory and disciplining, and exclusionary as well as inclusive. Since they are structured by power relations and inequalities, they may themselves be sites of democratic struggles. Nor can the significance and characteristics of these movements be divorced from the context within which they emerge and operate. This brings us again to the recent debates about “multiple” or “alternative” modernities. Since NSM theory is embedded within Western historical and national contexts, it does not take into consideration collective activism and discourses and their significance in non-Western contexts.²⁷

As discussed earlier, the views that modernity has its origin in the West and that it has spread from “the West” to “the Rest” of the world through commerce, colonialism, migration and the global media have been recently challenged by those scholars who

²⁷ For exceptions see Castells (1997) and Göle (1996a, 1997a, 2000a).

point to the possibility of different paths to modernity. While some call for the recognition of distinct modernities in other historical periods and other parts of the globe (Appadurai 1996; Gaonkar 2001), others refer to a world with both culturally diverse and universal features, emphasizing the importance of exploring the way the encounter with modernity is imagined, experienced, articulated and appropriated differently at different sites (Göle 2000b). In non-Western contexts, contemporary social movements are not only a crucial site for identity formation or for democratic struggles but also sites where (Western) modernity is resisted, contested and appropriated, where new modernities can be imagined and practiced. In non-Western contexts, then, contemporary social movements not only expose the homogenizing and universalizing aspects of Western modernity but also redefine the discourse of modernity in their own terms. They can be viewed as sites of “subversive micronarratives” (Appadurai 1996: 10) or even, what I would call, *subversive macronarratives* which may resist, subvert, transform, displace and replace the narratives of Western modernity and the modernizing projects of post-colonial states. Indeed, the social movements that emerged in Turkey since the 1980s have challenged the Kemalist modern project and the monopoly of the secular state over the project of modernization. As we shall see in Chapter 6, Islamist movements in Turkey have generated a *subversive macronarrative* – creating a competing vision and a project of political community – and have, thus, challenged the Kemalist project of modernity.

Additionally, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, in non-Western contexts, appropriations of modernity have often involved appeals to cultural authenticity or identity-based anti-colonial nationalisms (Chatterjee 1986, 1991). In this context, women’s bodies and sexuality have become the sites where communal, “authentic”

identity/difference (Kandiyoti 1991a; Moghadam 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997) and alternative projects of modernity are imagined and articulated (Göle 1996). Indeed, in Turkey, gender has been central in shaping discourses and projects of secularists and Islamists. Within these discourses women have been cast either as embodiments of cultural authenticity or symbols of modernity. In this context, feminist interventions have been important because they not only challenge the identities and missions imposed on women by different collectivist projects, but also undermine their identity politics, which tends to homogenize communities, erasing internal differences. The rest of this section focuses on the contribution of feminist reformulations of the public sphere to the debates and processes of democratization.

Feminist Perspectives on the Public Sphere and Democracy

Feminist scholars have long challenged the dominant view that politics is limited to those activities which occur in the formal spheres of politics. They have criticized the tendency to assume that the “public-private” distinction corresponds to the political-nonpolitical distinction, insisting that such a restricted conception of politics renders women’s activities as “non-political” and, hence, invisible (Pateman 1983, 1988; Okin 1998). Indeed, women have long been excluded from the realm of the political as citizens in the public sphere and have been confined to the private realm of domesticity. Feminist scholars and activists contest the dominant understanding of *the political*, especially the link made between politics and public sphere, and adopt a more expanded understanding of politics, locating power not only within state institutions but also in the everyday life, at every level of social interaction. For them, politics takes place not only within state

institutions but also in the family and in personal relationships. Thus, feminists not only expose the existing unequal power relations in the private sphere but also recognize women's activism in the private realm as political. By classifying institutions like the family as "private", the public-private distinction has long been used to hide male authority and domination and female subordination within the family from political scrutiny. This distinction, feminist scholars insist, has served to perpetuate and justify gender inequality in every sphere of life. Indeed, feminist movements struggle to politicize so-called "private" issues and thus make them "political/public".

Third world feminist scholars point to the problematic application of the public-private split, developed in Western contexts, to other locales, without considering their cultural and historical specificities (Mohanty 1991b). The division between public and private does not easily transfer as it is understood and constructed differently in Muslim contexts (Hessini 1994; Göle 1996a; İlyasoğlu 1998: 255-6). Private (*mahrem*) is seen as a space for both women and men; it is viewed as an intimate domain of the family. While private realm is "reserved for the family and is considered a 'female' space", "public space is designated as a 'male' area. The division of space parallels the division of gender roles: women fulfill their roles inside female space, the interior of the home, while men fulfill their roles in public space, that is, almost anywhere outside the family dwelling" (Hessini 1994: 43). The veil is "a symbol of interiority. Because a woman's space is interior, she is permitted to move through the exterior only if she remains separated from it" (*ibid.*:47). Göle argues that employing the Western conceptualization of public-private distinction instead of the separation of *mahrem* from *namahrem* leads to the suppression of the particularities of the domestic sphere in Muslim contexts. *Mahrem*, according to

Göle (1996a: 7), is a central term for grasping the issues of “intimacy, sexual segregation, and communal morality in a Muslim society”.

For scholars like Arendt and Habermas, the distinctiveness of the public sphere has more to do with the active participation of equal citizens in collective decision-making through open deliberation, debate and discussion. Crucial to my work here are the arguments developed by Habermas on the public sphere, as briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, and the critiques of his analysis, generated by feminist scholars in the late 1980s and in the 1990s. Despite its limitations, Habermas’s analysis provides important insights into the problems of democracy in contemporary society. A heterogeneous and inclusive public sphere is crucial to any project for democratization. Habermas’s conceptualization of the public sphere and the feminist reformulations of it enable us to highlight the significance of alternative public spheres as sites for articulation of alternative cultures and social norms, modernities, and articulation of identity/difference and new visions of politics to the dominant institutions, collective identities, forms of politics, and supposedly neutral cultural models and social norms. Public spheres provide new areas for constitution and representation of identity/difference²⁸ and for more inclusive democratic politics.

Habermas views the public sphere as an arena of institutions and practices that mediate between the state and society. It is marked by *equality* as access is guaranteed to all citizens (1974: 49). Thus, it is a sphere of deliberation and collective decision-making among *equals* as particularistic identities of individuals are transcended when they

²⁸ For an excellent discussion of the construction of identity/difference in the Republican public sphere and emerging alternative public spheres in Turkey see Baban 1999.

participate in public life.²⁹ The public sphere is a site where equal citizens get together as public to freely and critically discuss their common public affairs and reach a consensus. Many scholars, including feminists, have criticized Habermas's idealization of the bourgeois public sphere as a *free* and *egalitarian* domain by arguing that voices and interests of certain groups, such as women, were in fact excluded from it.³⁰ They emphasized the exclusionary and homogenizing nature of the bourgeois public sphere, which was, in fact, the site of inequality, oppression and domination. The emancipatory promises of the public sphere were not fully realized. While feminist scholars argue that Habermas's gender-blind account fails to problematize the gender dimension of the public-private distinction and thus cannot account for the exclusion of women from the bourgeois public sphere, others criticize his idealized account of the public sphere for its lack of attention to issues such as nationalism and religion (see Eley 1992 and Calhoun 1995: 231-282 for nationalism and Zaret 1992 for religion).³¹

²⁹ For both Habermas and Arendt, the public sphere is a place where citizens have equal status as particular identities and interests are left behind when people get to interact in public spaces. For Arendt (1958: 25-31), while the "household" is "the sphere of necessity", structured by inequality and governed by absolute rule rather than freedom, the political realm is realm free of all necessity. She argues that the public space emerges whenever human beings act and deliberate in concert. For Arendt, "the rise of the social", i.e. "the instrumental organization of society to pursue material ends" (Calhoun 1997: 234), undermines the necessary distinction between the private (the realm of necessity) and the public (the realm of freedom). While Arendt points to the decline of the public realm with the rise of mass society, Habermas has a more optimistic view. While Habermas focuses on the "degeneration" of the public sphere, he believes that the public sphere still contains the emancipatory promises of modernity. For an excellent analysis of Arendt's conceptualization of the public space see Benhabib 1992a and Calhoun 1997.

³⁰ See Young (1990: 96-121) (especially chapters 4 and 6); Fraser (1992); Benhabib (1992a); Ryan (1992); Eley (1992).

³¹ Habermas (1992: 422) accepted that he idealized the earlier bourgeois public sphere and clarified his position arguing that "he was establishing an 'ideal type' and not a normative ideal to be resuscitated and brought back to life."

In Habermas's account, then, the public sphere is a sphere of abstract, universal citizenship, and participation and inclusion in the public sphere require citizens to leave behind their particularistic interests and identities/differences (of class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age) in the private sphere to construct a larger political community. Citizens must set aside their particularities to attain the common good through public deliberation. The public sphere is understood in terms of universal principles such as *equality* and *impartiality*. Yet, as feminist theorists have pointed out, inclusion and participation in the public sphere have been shaped by masculinist, not neutral or abstract universal, norms. That is, Habermas's formulation of the public sphere tends to universalize and legitimize certain particularities – particular norms, interests or identities – and marginalize or exclude others. Thus, those who are different from an established identity in the public sphere or who has different interests is disadvantaged in their participation, is marginalized, or even fully excluded. Universalizing particular norms and identities, according to feminist critics, rests on the gendered public-private distinction. For Young (1990: 109), “by assuming that reason stands opposed to desire, affectivity, and the body, this conception of the civic public excludes bodily and affective aspects of human existence”. She criticizes the rationalist bias and the homogenizing effects of “the ideal of impartiality” embedded in Habermas's formulation of public sphere (1990: 117-119). This is, in fact, one of the key insights of feminist scholars who expose the bases of the gendered exclusion inherent in traditional notions of citizenship.

Most importantly, as Habermas perceives particularistic identities as private matters, not as a public concern, he fails to view (individual and collective) identity-formation or representation as public activity. Yet, identity-formation and interest

articulation must be treated as part of the process of public life, not as something that can be fully constituted in the private sphere (Calhoun 1992b: 35). Public spheres are sites not only for public deliberation and the formation of public opinion but also for “the formation and enactment of social identities” (Fraser 1992: 125). Individual and group identities/differences are contested, negotiated, reconstructed and discursively constituted in the political process through public deliberation. Also, as Fraser suggests (1992: 129), there are no naturally given public agenda; “what will count as a matter of common concern will be decided through discursive contestation”. In other words, interests are constructed through “discursive struggle”, i.e. through deliberation in the public spheres. Thus, in stratified societies, characterized by unequal power relations and domination, any consensus that claims to represent the common good must be considered suspicious as the existence of unequal power relations would affect the deliberative process.

The challenge of rethinking the public sphere in order to reconcile inclusion and equality with difference has generated substantial feminist debate (Cohen 1996). Feminist scholars like Fraser (1992), Benhabib (1992b: chapters 3, 5, 6), Young (1990: chapters 4 and 6), and Ryan (1992) criticize Habermas’s tendency to view the public sphere in a monolithic and homogeneous way (also Eley 1992). They insist on the indispensability of the concept of public sphere for a democratic feminism, while attempting to rethink it to make it more inclusive, egalitarian, tolerant of difference, and “woman-friendly” (Jones 1998). Feminist reconceptualizations of the public sphere do not conceive the public realm in a monolithic, homogeneous and undifferentiated way.³² Fraser (1992: 123) points to “subaltern counterpublics” which are understood as “parallel discursive arenas

³² Habermas also concedes that he “underestimated” the significance of oppositional and non-bourgeois “plebeian” public spheres (1992: 430).

where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs".³³

Young is critical of a civic public realm which requires citizens to leave behind their *particularity* to attain the *universality* of a general will (1990: 97). She argues for a heterogeneous public sphere that recognizes and affirms rather than represses difference. Young (1998) also proposes some institutional mechanisms to guarantee representation for marginalized groups in the public sphere.³⁴ Yet, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, there is a problem with treating women, or any other group, as homogeneous and monolithic. How would a group of women represent *all* of women's varied interests?³⁵ Who decides what constitutes a group? On what basis should women demand inclusion, *equality* or *difference*?

For the proponents of the politics of recognition, justice and democracy require public recognition and expression of the *differences* of identity groups by allowing for wider group representation and participation in politics (Taylor 1994; Fraser 1997a; Young 1998). The politics of recognition calls for a *group-differentiated* forms of citizenship (Kymlicka 1996; Phillips 1998; Young 1998), which aims to affirm differences rather than eliminating them. While such proposals represent important

³³ While Fraser acknowledges that some subaltern counterpublics are exclusionary, antidemocratic and antiegalitarian, she argues that as they "emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help expand discursive space" (see 1992: 124).

³⁴ The institutional mechanisms she proposes to facilitate participation and representation of marginalized groups include group veto, reserved seats in parliament, and allocation of public resources so that these groups could develop public policy proposals. In other words, Young proposes a *group-differentiated citizenship*, according to which certain disadvantaged or minority groups deserve special recognition in the public sphere since the current model only represents one group, i.e. white, male, urban, upper-class males.

³⁵ Women from marginalized ethnic, racial, class, and age groups are less likely to enter the public sphere of politics, which is dominated by the dominant ethnic and class groups.

contributions to democratic theory and practice, they suffer from important limitations. Advocates for group rights tend to view cultural groups as monolithic entities, thus essentializing identities by paying more attention to differences between groups rather than within groups (Okin 1999: 12).³⁶ Thus, the politics of recognition tends to ignore the ways cultural values and practices are internally contested, and they can be undemocratic and oppressive toward internal differences and dissenters.³⁷

In sum, most feminist theorists and activists, following Habermas (1996), support a deliberative vision of democracy, emphasizing the importance of multiple heterogeneous public spheres for democratic politics, within which individuals and groups get together to deliberate, to articulate their interests, to develop an alternative identity and alternative ways of doing politics. Following Habermas and his feminist critics, this study views the existence of multiple, heterogeneous public spheres and discursive interactions among them as crucial to the project of democracy. Public deliberation in an inclusive heterogeneous public spheres is a necessary component of a functioning democracy. It is within these public spheres that contemporary social movements form new identities, articulate new claims for inclusion, publicize new issues

³⁶ Also, the preoccupation with politics of identity/difference can divert attention from issues of distribution (Fraser 1997a, 2000).

³⁷ Okin (1999) points to the tension between feminism and multicultural politics of recognition, which defends the rights of “internally repressive” and “illiberal” cultural minority groups. She warns that providing cultural minorities with group rights may help (re)produce gender inequalities as minority groups often impose on their male and female members different roles in order to preserve and maintain their group differences (see Chapter 2). Okin views such patriarchal practices as clitoridectomy, polygamy and coerced marriages as characteristics of minority cultures, assuming that non-Western minority cultures are less progressive than Western cultures (1999: 14). Thus, she argues that women of minority cultures should be protected from their own oppressive cultures. For criticisms of Okin’s Orientalist arguments see Parekh (1999) and Bhabha (1999).

and demands, challenge the dominant cultural codes, monitor the state, and thus contribute to the democratization process.

By politicizing “private” issues feminist movements subvert the existing public-private dichotomy and seek to expose and transform existing gender inequalities in every sphere of life. As we shall see later in the dissertation, expanding the content of democracy was one of the main goals of the feminist movement(s) in Turkey. Feminists seek to transform the practice of politics to make it more inclusive. Since democracy refers not only to citizenship rights, but also to the practices of everyday life, feminists in Turkey also target the everyday life in order to transform hierarchical power relations and authoritarianism embedded in it. Feminist politics in Turkey, then, contributes to democratic changes both at the level of civil society and the state. Feminisms, both as a theoretical critique and as a social movement, help expand the existing public spheres, create new (counter-)publics, democratize the everyday life and develop a more inclusive understanding of democratic politics. The next section develops a framework with which to study feminist movements, combining the insights of social movement theory and feminist scholarship discussed in this section.

4. Analyzing Feminist Movements

A survey of the literature on feminist activism reveals that there is no paradigmatic framework or approach with which to study feminist movements. There is not even a consensus over what constitutes a “women’s” and/or a “feminist movement” (Molyneux 1998; Beckwith 2000). Some argue that a broad definition must be employed because too restrictive a definition runs the risk of keeping women’s political activity from being

visible at all (Molyneux 1998: 224; Vargas and Wieringa 1998: 5). Others define as a “women’s movement” all of those collective actions in which women predominate. In this definition, “women’s movements” include not only feminist movements but also anti-feminist, right wing women’s movements or groups and women’s participation in fundamentalist movements (Beckwith 2000: 437).³⁸

It is difficult to define feminist and/or women’s movements by specifying their goals since social movements often develop their interests and objectives (as well as strategies to achieve them) over time through constant negotiations. Yet, it is important to distinguish feminist groups, which share a critique of gender-based subordination, from anti-feminist women’s groups. This dissertation focuses on the activism and discourses of feminist groups as well as those women’s groups (such as some Islamist women in Turkey) that critique gender-based subordination of women to men.³⁹ Thus, feminist movements seek to expose and transform the existing gendered structures and gender

³⁸ Much of the work on feminist movements is based on the experiences of feminist collective activism in Western democratic countries (Mohanty et al. 1991; hooks 1984). It has been assumed that liberal democratic states constitute a pre-condition for social movements to emerge. Yet, this contradicts the evidence from feminist movements in Latin America, the Middle East and Asia where feminist activism has emerged in authoritarian and non-liberal contexts (Mohanty et al. 1991; Jaquette 1994; Basu 1995).

³⁹ Islamist women in Turkey do not self-identify as “feminist”. A number of Islamist women, in fact, are very critical of feminism and can even be identified as “anti-feminist”. However, some Islamist women – while rejecting the label “feminist” – talk about women’s subordination and contest sexist norms and practices in society. In their writings they often employ feminist terms such as “male-domination”, “sexism” and “women’s oppression”. They reject the label “feminist” because it is associated with “the imperialist West” and it connotes “promiscuity”. In this dissertation I do not employ the term “feminist” to describe them because they do not self-identify as “feminist”. However, I focus on these Islamist women in Chapter 6 because their discourses and activism conform to the definition of feminist movements employed above.

relations, identities, roles and cultural codes that subordinate women to men.⁴⁰ Feminist movements can be “characterized as an expansive, polycentric, heterogeneous discursive field of action which spans into a vast array of cultural, social and political arenas ... [whose activists see themselves as] working to alter gender power relations that circumscribe their own lives as women” (Alvarez 1999: 184, 186). This definition does not encompass struggles against other unequal power relations, “leaving open the conceptual possibility of feminist movements that are highly class-constrained, racist, or nationalist” (Beckwith 2000: 437-438). Indeed, further research is required into if, when, and how feminist movements challenge (or reproduce) other power inequalities. As discussed earlier, this dissertation does not treat feminist movements, or any social movement for that matter, as distinctively inclusive, democratic and just. While feminisms all around the world seek structural changes in power relations between men and women, feminist movements display different characteristics, depending upon the historical, political, cultural, and economic contexts in which they arise and develop. The specificity of feminist movements in Turkey cannot be grasped without exploring the ways in which women have been linked to the Kemalist projects of modernization and nation-building (see Chapter 3).

⁴⁰ In this dissertation, “gender” is understood as the socially, historically and subjectively constructed dichotomy of masculine and feminine. Gender is “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (Scott 1988: 42). Also, “patriarchy” is not viewed as a universal social structure, autonomous from other structures of domination, as different structures of domination and social divisions (of class, race and ethnicity) interact and intersect with each other in different ways in different societies at different times. Women’s oppression in different societies is produced and reproduced by different forms of oppression and social relations. For criticisms of ahistorical conceptualizations of “patriarchy”, see Yuval-Davis (1997) and Kandiyoti (1991c).

As there is no paradigmatic approach with which to study feminist movements this dissertation constructs a framework, combining the insights of social movement theory and feminist scholarship. As we have seen, social movement theory (NSM theory in particular) expands the boundaries of the political and extends the idea of democracy to the everyday, rather than adopting a state-centered understanding of politics and democracy. This is critical for a study of feminist movements and their contributions to the democratization process.

Yet, social movement theory alone is not adequate to the task of analyzing feminist movements, especially in non-Western contexts of modernity. First, it fails to take into account unequal power relations and gender, class, and ethnic hierarchies which impose constraints on feminist collective action (Bartholomew and Mayer 1992: 148-149). Analyzing feminist movements and their contribution to democratic politics requires an understanding of the nature of gendered (and class, ethnicized, racialized) inclusions/exclusions, and gendered discourses and practices, in national, regional as well as global contexts, which can serve as both opportunities and impediments to feminist efforts to “engender democracy”⁴¹ (Phillips 1991). Feminist movements often draw on the existing gender discourses within states, as well as on the “emerging global gender

⁴¹ Eschle (2002) rightly argues that most feminist efforts to “engender democracy” “remain centered on states and the states-system as vehicles for democratic representation and participation”, ignoring the impact of processes of globalization. “Engendering global democracy”, for Eschle, requires confronting both gender hierarchies and globalization. Indeed, the current global economic restructuring is not a gender-neutral process; women in many countries have organized to combat the injustices engendered by global capitalist transformations. Mohanty (2003: 515) recently emphasized the need for an “anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and contextualized feminist project to expose and make visible the various, overlapping forms of subjugation of women’s lives”.

equality regime” (Kardam 2004), to expose certain contradictions and to mobilize support for their demands to eradicate existing gender inequalities.

Secondly, social movement theory assumes a (gender-)neutral state. As it emphasizes the autonomy of movements from traditional political institutions, it does not problematize the state. In most cases, however, states are referents for feminist movements whether they seek entry into or autonomy from the state (Pringle and Watson 1992; Rai 1996). As Jaquette observes, states are the only social institutions “with the legitimacy, scope and credibility to deliver any of the goods feminists seek, from reproductive rights to affirmative action” and “norms adopted internationally depend on states to implement them” (Jaquette 2003: 342; also Basu 2003: 100).

Thirdly, social movement theory, in particular NSM theory, does not take into consideration (women’s as well as men’s) collective activism and discourses and their significance in non-Western contexts. As discussed earlier, in non-Western contexts, contemporary social movements are not only a crucial site for identity formation and potential sites for democratic struggles but also sites where modernity (i.e. the narratives of Western modernity and/or the modernizing projects of post-colonial states) is resisted, contested, subverted and appropriated. Furthermore, in non-Western contexts, appropriations of modernity or imaginations of alternative modernities have often involved regulating women’s bodies, behaviour, and sexuality.

This dissertation, then, argues that a framework for analyzing feminist movements and the contribution of feminist interventions to democratic politics, especially in non-Western contexts, must be rooted not only in social movement theory but also in the

feminist insights about the gendered nature of national, regional and global political institutions and processes, especially about the gendered nature of the state.

Feminist Perspectives on the State

Even though the goals of new social movements are often cultural or social, the transformation sought by feminists requires the changing of legal and political institutions and practices. Thus, it is crucial to be aware of how states and state processes are gendered as well as the different kinds of states with which women interact. Feminist theory, however, does not have a singular theory of the state. While liberal feminists have taken the pluralist view that states are neutral bodies that arbitrate between the competing interests in society, socialist feminists view states as coercive agents responsible for reproducing gender- and class-based inequalities. For radical feminists, the state is inherently patriarchal, which enforces women's subordination through its legal system (MacKinnon 1982). As states are viewed as an oppressive tool used by men to defend male interests, upholding the structures of patriarchy, radical feminist scholars and activists have been suspicious of the state.

Poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist scholars (Pringle and Watson 1992; Rai 1996 respectively) attempt to move beyond the characterization of the state as a "foe" or a "friend", urging women to recognize the state as more of a complex net, bringing together many varied and often conflicting interests, rather than a monolithic, capitalist, paternalistic, male-dominated entity. They view the state as a series of discursive arenas where women construct their interests through discursive debate with other actors, groups, or movements (Pringle and Watson 1992; Rai 1996: 5). While the state is

implicated in structuring and reproducing all power relations and inequalities between classes, genders and races, these relations are not static. This approach depicts the state as a series of arenas, which, at times, can be relatively open. Thus, it lends room for feminists to work with the state. In Turkey, the possible EU membership has provided an opening within the state, which feminist groups seized to push for their demands. The government, dominated by a pro-Islamist party (Justice and Development Party – AKP), has responded to these demands in order to enhance its legitimacy, convincing the Turkish secular establishment and the EU of party's moderate stance, and to demonstrate to European skeptics that Turkey is a modern, democratic country, which should be included among European states.

Postcolonial feminists emphasize the fragmented nature of states, especially in postcolonial states, where weak state capacity undermines the potential for programs aimed at improving women's lives to be fully and effectively implemented. Rai (1996) argues that since much of the existing feminist theorizing on the state is grounded in the experiences of the Western, industrialized welfare states, it does not take into account the ways in which colonial experiences and modernization projects affect women's lives in the postcolonial world. Rai highlights three features of post-colonial states which ultimately affect the condition of women, and hence women's engagements with the state, differently than in the West: the role of nationalist elites as agents of social and economic transformation, i.e. the transformative role of the state; the weak infrastructural capacity of the state; and higher levels of corruption, which is a recurring problem in the functioning of post-colonial states. Women living in post-colonial states, then, do not face the same challenges or have the same experiences as women in the developed world.

The approach espoused by postcolonial feminist scholars is useful as it allows us to move beyond the simplistic either “in” or “against” the state perspectives. It allows us to recognize that the state is neither a mechanism for male control nor the ultimate vehicle for gender-based social and political change. As there is no homogeneity within the state, the state is subject to the power relations contained within it. It is a series of arenas which women must work through to battle oppression, articulate the interests of different groups of women, and promote change. The argument about the state not being a unitary actor reinforces the need for women and other disadvantaged groups to challenge the power structure within the state in order to contest oppressive practices. This approach also enables us to recognize that states take different forms in different contexts and their forms shape the “strategies available to women in their struggle against and negotiations” with states (Rai 1996: 5).

Not all feminist movements pursue their goals *through* the state. Indeed, it has been common for feminist movements to fragment as certain portions become institutionalized, while others struggle to maintain their autonomy from the state. This undermines the goal of achieving women’s empowerment because there are usually few links between the institutionalized and non-institutionalized spheres (Waylen 1996; Franceschet 2001). As Virginia Vargas and Saskia Wieringa (1998) argue, close relations and cooperation among three groups of actors – the women’s movement, feminist politicians, and feminist civil servants (or femocrats) – are important as they bridge civil society and the state. Through their interaction, these actors make up the “triangle of empowerment”, which articulate women’s demands, translate them into policy issues and struggle to widen political support for their agenda to achieve empowerment for women.

Women should struggle both inside and outside the state for the ultimate goal of transforming politics and of empowering women (Rai 1996; Franceschet 2001).

As argued above, social movement theory alone is not adequate to the task of analyzing feminist movements because it ignores the dominant gender discourses and practices in particular contexts, which constrain or encourage collective action, and because it fails to problematize the state. Thus, drawing from the two broad sets of literatures – social movement theory and feminist state theory – this dissertation builds in two key propositions. First, an analysis of feminist movements requires an understanding of the prevailing gender discourses that prescribe and define gender roles in particular contexts. It also requires uncovering the way that movement activists often draw on the existing gender discourse to expose certain contradictions, to construct shared meanings, and to mobilize support for their demands. Indeed, gender discourses often set up contradictions in women's lives that encourage collective action. In other words, the existing gender discourse forms part of the "political opportunity structure" in which feminist activism emerges (Bodur and Franceschet 2002).

Second, as states serve as referents for feminist movements, it is crucial to take into account the type of state that surrounds them. Because states are not uniform and take different shapes, the struggles to improve women's lives also take many forms. As will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, modernizing postcolonial states have taken a leading role in the promotion of women's emancipation. In such cases, much of the struggle of feminist movements involves carving out an autonomous space for themselves in which the meaning of women's liberation, along with the strategies for empowerment, can be autonomously defined and achieved. Greater attention to state-

society relations in particular contexts also helps to explain the debates and divisions about movement objectives and the strategies for empowerment that exist within feminist movements.

In sum, this dissertation argues that despite its limitations, the analysis of feminists movements in Turkey can rely on a critical use of social movement theory as long as it is also situated in the feminist insights about the gendered nature of the state. This dissertation emphasizes the critical influence the Turkish state has had on women in Turkey. The study of feminist movements in Turkey in Chapters four, five and six will illustrate some of the propositions made in this section.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have engaged with broader debates concerning modernity, multiple modernities and the question of agency in the late modern world. The chapter situated the dissertation in the literature on modernity and social movements and in the broader literature on gender and politics. It argued that contemporary social movements operate to both reflect and generate profound transformations that late-modern societies are undergoing. They serve not only as potential vehicles to realize the emancipatory and democratic potential that late modernity contains, but also as sites where modernity is subverted and transformed and where alternative modernities can be imagined and practiced. Contemporary movements expand democratization beyond the institutions of the state into the intimate sphere and democratize the existing public space(s) and create new alternative (counter)publics. Indeed, as will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 5

and 6, in the Turkish context, feminist movements have struggled to enter the existing Republican public sphere to transform it to become more inclusive.

Yet, it would be problematic to adopt a wholly celebratory attitude toward social movement politics as contemporary social movements can be sites not only of emancipation, empowerment and inclusion, but also of domination, discipline, marginalization and exclusion. Since social movements are structured by power relations, they may themselves be sites of democratic struggles. Thus, the issue of internal democracy in social movement politics must be considered. The chapter argued that rather than idealizing contemporary social movements, it is important to explore the historically contingent ways in which they emerge, challenge and transform politics.

This chapter also argued that despite its limitations, the analysis of the feminist movement in Turkey can rely on a critical use of the social movement literature as long as it is situated in a feminist theoretical framework. The integration of social movement theory with feminist insights can help us better explore current struggles of feminist movements and state responses to their demands. This chapter argued that feminist theory and activism contribute to democratization of both society and the state by exposing authoritarian practices that lead to exclusions and marginalizations and by expanding the meaning of democracy, drawing attention to women's involvement in social movement politics. The next chapter, building on the arguments made here, discusses the relationship between nationalism and modernity and highlights the importance of analyzing the processes of nation- and state-building and how they shape the historical and political terrain in which feminist struggles for women's empowerment play out.

CHAPTER II: MODERNITY, NATIONALISM AND FEMINISMS

The previous chapter established the broad framework within which the crisis of the Kemalist project of modernity, the emergence of social movements and prospects of democracy in Turkey are to be located. This chapter further charts the theoretical framework for the thesis, focusing on the link between modernity and nationalism. Drawing on the works of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Renan and Ernest Gellner, it highlights the modern character of the nation. It argues that the rise of the nation-state, one of the institutional forms of modernity, involved the process of the nationalization of society, which often entailed processes of inclusion/exclusion and homogenization. The modern form of nation embodied a presumed homogeneous organic community as the nation-building projects often depended on communal discourses. As postcolonial scholars of nationalism point out, this homogenizing, universalizing and disciplining character of community has been deployed not only by Western colonialist nationalisms, but also in the narratives of anticolonial nationalisms.

The work of feminist scholars of nationalism is then used to highlight that nation-building is a gendered process and the articulation of national identity/difference depends on the regulation of gender and the control of women. The nationalization of society is often based on women's integration into nationalist projects, either as reproducers of national communities, as cultural transmitters or as signifiers of national difference or as participants in national struggles. The analysis of the links between nationalism and gender thus provides a framework to examine the Kemalist nationalist discourse and its construction and representation of women in Chapter 3.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part focuses on the links between modernity and nationalism, highlighting the way imagining nations involves processes of boundary-making. The second and third parts focus on postcolonial and feminist critics whose works represent a significant break with the dominant literature on nationalism. While postcolonial critics' attempt to problematize identity allows us to re-think the complex issues of national and communal identity, feminist critics expose the ways communities and states regulate membership and centrality of gender to such regulations. Drawing on the works of feminist scholars like bell hooks and Chandra Mohanty, the last part explores the exclusionary tendencies within feminist movements. While feminisms challenge the presumed homogeneity of "imagined communities" by stressing women's differences, they also generate, and depend on, communal discourses, marginalizing or excluding particularities of some women. I conclude this chapter arguing that feminist movements should recognize the differences of women in order to realize the democratic potential of social movements in both Western and non-Western contexts of modernity.

1. Modernity and Nationalism

Nationalism is one of the central narratives and projects, which shaped modern societies and continue to shape late-modernity. As noted in Chapter 1, the political aspect of modernity involves the rise of the modern state and the nationalization of society. Modernist scholars of nationalism argue that the rise of industrial capitalism, science and rationalism, modern state, and mass communications destroyed old structures and

authorities and rendered ancient cultures obsolete and thus led to the emergence of a new kind of political community.¹

The modernist position perhaps finds its best expression in the theory of Benedict Anderson. According to Anderson, the possibility of imagining the nation arose when the breakdown of religious communities and of dynastic empires undermined the ways in which people had been imagining themselves. Anderson points to the decline of three fundamental cultural conceptions of the antiquity: the belief that sacred languages and scripts, such as Latin and Arabic, were the only languages conveying the truth; “the belief that society was naturally organized around and under high centers” and “a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable” (1991: 9-26). With the decline of these “interlinked certainties” older identities began to lose their credibility. When the two great realms of church and dynasty declined, the nation began to help humanity to overcome the finality of death, uniting the living and the dead. This only became possible with the fundamental change in the conception of time. While pre-modern notions of time were based on the idea of “simultaneity of the past and future in an instantaneous present”, the modern conception of time situated events in “homogeneous, empty time” measured by clock and calendar (1991: 22-36). The idea of

¹ One of the most important debates within the existing literature revolves around the issue of the origins of nations and nationalisms. While students of “primordialism”, such as Walker Connor (1994), mainly base their arguments on the importance of primordial factors such as religion, race, language, ethnicity and territory and claim that nations and nationalism are as old as first historical records, “modernists” like Renan (1990), Deutsch (1966), Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm (1992) assert the contingency of nations and nationalism in history and their relative modernity. For modernists, nations and nationalisms must be treated as the products of the specifically modern conditions of capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, secularism and mass communication and as inevitable components of the rise of the modern state. For a comprehensive discussion of the debate between primordialists and modernists and for an alternative viewpoint – which can be regarded as a synthesis of these approaches see Smith (1986, 1995).

the nation, Anderson argues, helped locate individuals both in relation to past and future generations and in the global context as members of one among many nations.

“Print-capitalism”, that is commercial printing on a widespread scale, also contributed to the birth of nationalism. For Anderson (1991: 46), “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation”. Books and newspapers, as first mass-produced industrial commodities of print-capitalism, made possible the imagination of new communities as they enabled the creation and spread of vernacular languages through which nations are imagined (1991: 25-35, 37-46).² They laid the bases of national consciousness by creating a new group of readers connected with one another through their common texts (1991: 35). In this way, print-capitalism encouraged speakers of particular vernaculars to identify with each other; books and newspapers created a vernacular readership whose limits often helped define the nation.

Despite the centrality of nationalism to modern and late-modern social and political life, very few major works on modernity gave enough attention to nationalism (Arnason 1990; Delanty and O’Mahony 2002). Indeed, the two important grand narratives of modernity, liberalism and Marxism, in different ways, have predicted the demise of nations and nationalisms, arguing that once they perform their historical role,

² Indeed, Anderson highlights language as the essential cultural condition of nationhood. For him, in many cases nationalism involved privileging of vernaculars in place of Latin and sometimes involved the recovery of little used vernaculars.

they will gradually disappear with the revolutionary processes of modernization (and now by globalization of Western modernity) and economic development.³

The appeal of nationalism as a political force and the enduring persuasiveness of national identity, according to Anthony Smith, derive from their “historical embeddedness”. National cultures inspire as well as comfort human beings for loss, grief and death since they can provide memories, myths, symbols and values (Smith 1995: 22-23). Anderson draws attention to nationalism’s appeal as a faith in an eternal life through membership of a nation. In an age of declining religion nationalism has a special appeal as a “secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning” (Anderson 1991: 11). Indeed, Anderson (1991: 5) views nationalism as a distinct mode of understanding the phenomenon of *belonging* together. For Anderson, nations and nationalisms are constructs of social engineering and to understand them properly we must consider how they have come into being historically, in what ways their meanings have changed over time, and why they command such profound emotional legitimacy.

Indeed, with the demise of the dynastic empires and the breakdown of religious communities, the nation came to be the primary source of identification and solidarity, overriding other identities and loyalties, as well as the main building bloc of the new modern social and political order (Anderson 1991). It became the embodiment of social and collective agency. With the decline of monarchy, sovereignty came to rest in the “social body”, the nation. While the nation embodied modern ideas of autonomy, freedom and self-determination, nation-states emerged as vehicles of social and political

³ For a critique of Marxist and liberal viewpoints on nationalism see Smith (1990a, 1995). Smith contends that ethnicity and nationalism cannot be superseded easily because ethnic community has a long history. For Smith, any attempt to grasp the current resurgence of ethnic nationalisms must relate them to pre-modern identities and legacies.

transformation, and, thus, as embodiments of progress. As we shall see, men have been seen as embodying the political and economic agency of the nation, while women are represented as passive symbols of culture and tradition. As Anne McClintock (1993: 62) argues, “[w]omen are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency”.

It should be noted that the image or the idea of the body has served as a powerful metaphor for imagining the nation and of the social order and polity. In the words of Ernest Renan (1990: 18), nation is “both a soul and body at once”. As will be shown in Chapter 3, Kemalist nationalism viewed the “Turkish nation” as an organic body, denying the existence of any difference with the national community. The nation, as an organic social body, as a modern subject, was “born” at a certain time. It has a history and it is subject to change. Indeed, Renan argues, nations are not “eternal” as “[t]hey had their beginnings and they will end” (1990: 20).

Nationalisms, then, have articulated nations as organic bodies and/or communities and have depended on myths of organic unities, heroic pasts and origins. Indeed, many students of nationalism put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of origins, continuity, and tradition to the imagination/construction of nations. According to Renan (1990: 19), there are two things that constitute the common core of the nation: common set of *memories* from the *past* and the *will* to live together in the *future*. Through series of struggles people share common set of memories, a legacy of glories, and histories in the epics, on the basis of which nations are constructed and/or imagined. As Renan (1990: 19) argues, “[t]o have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are

the essential conditions for being a people". The nation is "the modern Janus", one face looking back into a presumed communal past for authentic culture and the other looking into a common communal future (Kandiyoti 1991a). Within these Janus-faced nationalist projects women come to represent both the past and the future as not only are they the bearers of culture and tradition but also they give birth and raise the future members of the community (Kandiyoti 1991a).

More recently, some modernist scholars of nationalism like Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Anderson (1991) have highlighted the constructed, "invented", and "imagined" nature of nations and nationalisms. They have noted the elements of artefact and invention that enter into the making of nations. The modern concept of nation is a "construct", an "invented" or "imagined" category, developed by nationalist ideologues and politicians (Gellner 1983) at the end of the eighteenth century in order to meet the requirements of modernity.⁴ Thus, for Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), a nation is composed of many consciously "invented traditions" which binds past and present. Similarly, Gellner views nations as the recent cultural "artefacts of *men's* convictions and loyalties and solidarities" (1983: 7, my emphasis). In the modernist image of nation, then, nations are not natural units, a historic national or ethnic identity is a pure fiction.

For Anderson (1991: 6), the nation is "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Nations are imagined since the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow nationals, meet them, or even hear of them, however, in the minds of each lives the image of their bond.

⁴ Some students of nationalism also highlight the role nationalist elites, intellectuals and leaders play in the construction, mobilization and politicization of ethnic/national identities/differences and in the "invention" of tradition". See Brass (1985, 1991), Smith (1981), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), and Anderson 1991.

All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined. What distinguishes nations from other imagined communities is the style in which they are imagined. Nations are imagined as *limited* since they have boundaries beyond which there are other nations. Nations are imagined *sovereign* because “the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm” (Anderson 1991: 7) and in which nations dream of being free and of politically articulated in the modern sovereign state. Finally, nations are imagined as a *community* because they are always conceived as “a deep, horizontal comradeship” and it is this strong sense of “*fraternity*” that helps to explain the willingness and readiness of many millions of people to die, and even to kill, for their imagined communities (Anderson 1991: 7).

These scholars have also pointed to the existing ethnic/national images, ideas, and foundational myths and traditions that enable and constrain imaginations of nations and national identities. While some scholars, like Smith (1986), emphasize the importance of “ethnic roots”, others, like Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), evoke history or tradition. Nationalism, as Gellner (1983: 49) argues, “sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures”. Perhaps most importantly, some scholars emphasize that imagining nations selectively retain and *forget* certain histories, traditions and myths. *Forgetting*, according to Renan, “is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation” (1990: 11). Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 3, the Kemalist nation-building project in Turkey entailed forgetting the Ottoman past (at least certain periods of it) and uncovering/imagining the distinctive

heritage and history of pre-Islamic Turks in Central Asia. The nationalist elites privileged certain myths, traditions, histories and cultural symbols over the others.

Nations, then, are imagined on the basis of foundational myths, events, histories, and symbols. Moreover, these traditions and symbols are constantly reinvented, mythical histories are continually rewritten and boundaries of national communities are continuously negotiated and redrawn. Indeed, as many students of nationalism point out, nationalism is about origins, belonging, loyalty and solidarity. As we shall see in the next two sections, however, postcolonial and feminist scholars of nationalism argue that imagining nations also involves processes of boundary-making and “Othering”. While nationalisms produce and reproduce the boundaries of the nation, they simultaneously (re)construct the “Other”, the outsider, the minority, the stranger, the enemy.

National identities represent attachment to particular places, events, symbols, and histories (Hall 1996c). They, then, represent *particularistic* forms of attachment or belonging. Yet, nationalism presents itself as universal even while it privileges a particular identity. Universalism, which presupposes abstraction from history, from particularistic identities and loyalties, in fact involves the universalization of particularity. The nation simultaneously legitimizes the particular and universal ideas and ideals.

This tension between the universal and the particular within nationalism has persisted and often made it difficult for modern states to realize the vision of national society as a *uniform* entity. Indeed, armed with the centralization of political power and the expansion of administrative rule, modern states engaged in nation-building projects, often imposing uniformity over (ethnic, religious, linguistic, racial) diversity through standardization of language and law, and administration of standardized public education.

Modern states emerged as the only agent to create a homogeneous culture by erasing local and regional practices, languages and knowledge through the creation and administration of public education and communication systems (Gellner 1983).⁵ States introduce and promote national programs through which they seek to “discipline” the population, to shape citizens/subjects and their identities (Foucault 1980) and to achieve uniformity. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the Kemalist nationalist project sought to create a homogenous nation through institutions of the state, especially by creating a standardized public education system. Nationalism, as Gellner argues (1983: 43), aims to “make culture and polity congruent, to endow a culture with its own political roof” and it is “nationalism which engenders nations and not the other way round” (1983: 55).

While national identities continue to be represented as fixed, unified and homogeneous, most nations are cultural, ethnic, and religious hybrids, and unification has involved processes of homogenization and/or forcible suppression of cultural difference. As Renan argued, the violent origins of nations have first to be “forgotten” before loyalty to a more unified, homogeneous national identity could begin to be forged. National identities, then, are unstable, unfixed, relational, and most importantly, contested. As Hall (1996c: 618) argues, they are not free of the play of power, internal divisions and contradictions, cross-cutting allegiances and differences. Nations can be seen as historically produced, unfinished and contested terrains. Nations and nationalisms are

⁵ Gellner’s structural-functionalist approach relates the homogenizing and unifying drive in nationalism to the process of industrialization which can only function with “a mobile, literate, culturally standardized” work force (1983: 46). Nationalism has emerged and operated as a force helping in the process of industrialism and in the construction of a standard culture. This, in turn, has required the modern national state as the only agency to shape, or even create, a homogeneous culture through compulsory, standardized, public mass education systems and communication.

always in process, despite the naturalizing and normalizing discourses that disguise their politics (Pettman 1996: 48).

In sum, nationalism, as one of the key features of modernity, incorporates contradictory and paradoxical tendencies. It relies not only on forgetting but also remembering/imagining. It preaches universality, yet it universalizes particularistic identities. It relies on inclusion and exclusion of groups, identities, traditions and myths, as it describes and imposes boundaries. As nationalisms involve processes of identity formation, imposition of boundaries and borders, and homogenization of culture, they are often based on communal discourses. Yet, national/communal boundaries and identities are not fixed as contests, conflicts and negotiations continue over the borders and boundaries of belonging. Drawing from postcolonial and feminist scholarship, the following two sections discuss in more detail the exclusionary, homogenizing and gendered processes of nation-building.

2. Imagining/Narrating the Nation: Postcolonial Critique of Nationalism

The dominant Western scholarship on nationalism has come under increasing challenge over the last decade, especially in the works of postcolonial and feminist scholars. These scholars have exposed the closures of nationalist discourses, which have excluded and marginalized otherness, cultural difference and diversity. While postcolonial scholars have argued that anti-colonial nationalisms, like Western colonialist nationalisms, deploy a homogenizing, universalizing and disciplining discourse and practice, feminist theorists have pointed out that constructions/imaginings of national communities often depend on the regulation of gender differences and control of women's bodies.

Postcolonial scholars have criticized the dominant discourse on nationalism for its universalist assumptions about the homogeneous, fixed and stable “national identity”. Recognizing the heterogeneity and hybridity of national identity and shifting attention from “national origin” to “subject-position”, postcolonial critiques challenge the notion of homogeneous and organic national and/or ethnic communities and cultures. It is, then, important to look at how postcolonial criticism problematizes, deconstructs and reconstructs identity/difference.⁶

Postcolonialism questions the authority and universalism of Western knowledge and all modern grand or master narratives, especially nationalism.⁷ Although nationalism has been considered to be a powerful challenge to Western colonialism and Orientalism, it has, in fact, operated with Eurocentric master narratives. Anti-colonial nationalism reverses the Orientalist discourse, attributing agency and history to the colonized nation, while accepting ideas of “reason” and “progress” (Chatterjee 1986). For Chatterjee, anti-colonial nationalist discourse “in agreeing to become ‘modern’ accepts the claim to

⁶ Darby and Paolini (1994) argued that there are three different movements in post-colonialism. Aside from the initial Commonwealth literary criticism phase, they located two further overlapping but distinct movements: “the concern with resistance and recovery” and “the engagement with ideas of ambivalence and hybridity derived from contemporary social theory” (1994: 376-379). Postcolonialism urges a re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge produced by colonialism, analyzing the history of colonialism, imperialism, racism and how they shaped and continue to shape the history, culture and the study of postcolonial societies and marginalized groups. For discussions on postcolonialism see Prakash (1992), Shohat (1992), Mishra and Hodge (1994).

⁷ The questioning of master narratives of modernity, of positivism and universalism, and an interest in the constructions of self/other have also been articulated in postmodern studies. Despite this overlap, however, postcolonialism and postmodernism are still two different scholarships. While the history and implications of colonialism, imperialism and racism constitute the core motifs of postcolonial studies, there is a Eurocentric bias in postmodern studies. Also, postcolonialism reformulates the postmodern notion of the “fractured self” by shifting the attention to processes of “subject formation” and by ascribing agency to the subject. For discussions on the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism see Appiah (1991) and Said (1995).

universality of this 'modern' framework of knowledge. Yet it also asserts the autonomous identity of a national culture" (1986: 11). In other words, while anti-colonial nationalism has challenged Orientalism's constitution of the colony as Europe's "Other", it has also perpetuated the essentialism of Orientalism by affirming a national essence in history. The discourse of nationalism, both Western colonial and anti-colonial, is also criticized in the works of other influential postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, for being *totalizing* and *essentialist*.

The anti-colonial struggle for a modern nation-state, with a national history, language, culture, and its own state apparatus seems to reproduce what the former conqueror had promoted. In fact, what European imperialism and anti-colonial nationalisms have achieved together is the universalization of the nation-state as the most desirable form of political community. Since anti-colonial nationalist discourse is viewed as a "derivative discourse" of the Europe-oriented colonized bourgeoisie, rather than an autonomous one, it is criticized for being foreign to the majority of the colonized population. At the same time, by virtue of its specificity as anti-colonial nationalism, bourgeois anti-colonial nationalism was obliged to go beyond European nationalisms:

Pitting itself against the reality of colonial rule ... [anticolonial] nationalism succeeds in producing a *different* discourse. The difference is marked, on the terrain of political-ideological discourse, by a political contest, a struggle for power, which nationalist thought must think about and set down in words. Its problematic forces it relentlessly to demarcate itself from the discourse of colonialism. Thus nationalist thinking is necessarily a struggle with an entire body of systematic knowledge, a struggle that is political at the same time as it is intellectual. Its politics impels it to open up that framework of knowledge which presumes to dominate it, to displace that framework, to subvert its authority, to challenge its morality.

Yet in its very constitution as a discourse of power, nationalist thought cannot remain only a negation; it is also a *positive* discourse which seeks to replace the structure of colonial power with a new order, that of national power. Can nationalist thought produce a discourse of order while daring to negate the very foundations of a system of knowledge that has conquered the world? How far can it succeed in maintaining its difference from a discourse that seeks to dominate it?

A different discourse, yet one that is dominated by another: that is my hypothesis about nationalist thought. (Chatterjee 1986: 40, 42).

Here Chatterjee attempts to decolonize the discourse of nationalism in the postcolonial world. Although anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa tried to assert their freedom from Western domination, they yet remained dominated by the post-Enlightenment rationalist discourse. Chatterjee (1991) is critical of Benedict Anderson's argument that once the idea of imagining political communities as nations developed, it was "modular" and could be simply transplanted in other settings.⁸ He (1991: 521) rightly asks:

If nationalists in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we, in the post-colonial world, shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true

⁸ Anderson (1991) looks at three different types of nationalism which spread out over four distinct historical phases, where the last phase seems to be a combination of the three types. He locates the first wave of nationalism in the Americas. The creole communities of the New World were first to develop the idea of national identity as a basis for self-determination (1991: 47-65). The second model was that of linguistic nationalisms of Europe of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Intellectuals, philologists and grammarians played a major role in the creation of national consciousness and European nationalisms (1991: 67-82). The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a third model called "official nationalism". Fearing the breakup of the empires through growing nationalist demands from below, the old dynastic empires (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia) developed their nationalisms from above, which involved the imposition of cultural homogeneity through state action (1991: 83-111). The last type, 'third world nationalism', draws on the experiences of the previous three. Of the states established since the WW II, some attained independence on the basis of populism (European nationalism) and some based on a policy of official nationalism (1991: 113-140).

subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and post-colonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized.

As Chatterjee argues, Anderson downplays the importance of agency of the postcolonial world as he views the “Third World” countries as the passive consumers of Western modernity. Yet, as Chatterjee points out, “[t]he most powerful as well as creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity, but on a *difference*, with the ‘modular’ forms of the national society propagated by the modern West” (1991: 521).

Chatterjee also criticized the dominant literature on nationalism for essentializing the distinctions between “Western/Eastern”, “good/bad” and “civic/ethnic” nationalisms (1986: 1-3).⁹ For Chatterjee, this essentialism enjoys a straightforward ethnic privilege: the superiority of the Europeans and of Western civilization over others. Within this framework, modern Western culture is thought to possess special attributes, which make “the Western” culturally equipped for progress, while traditional cultures of “the East” is argued to lack such attributes.¹⁰ Indeed, as Said (1993: 59) puts it, the dominant

⁹ See, for instance, Plamenatz (1976); Kohn (1944, 1955); Smith (1981, 1986, 1991).

¹⁰ Since the events of 9/11, the Bush administration has consistently employed this discourse to legitimize the “war against terrorism” and the American invasion of Iraq. While both President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair try hard to avoid framing their current foreign policy decisions in terms of “clash of civilizations”, they both employ an Orientalist, “we” versus “them”, discourse, which has the effect of removing agency from those living in that part of the globe where “there is shadow and darkness” (see, for instance, Tony Blair’s speech to the US Congress on July 17, 2003, retrieved at www.guardian.co.uk, July 18 2003). Also, both the war against Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq have been justified as part of a civilizing mission that cast the Coalition partners as rescuing and protecting oppressed men and especially women, who are victimized and oppressed by their Afghani or Iraqi males. For feminist criticisms of

nationalist discourse relegated the non-European to a secondary cultural and ontological status as opposed to the essential genuineness of the European.

Postcolonial scholarship aims to abolish all such binary oppositions as West/East, colonizer/colonized, and us/them, which are seen as the legacy of Western colonialism and imperialism. Rejecting these Orientalist categories and questioning the representation of cultures and societies as homogeneous and unmixed, postcolonial discourse speaks of the “betweenness” of cultures and the “hybridity” of cultural experience.

In the dominant nationalist discourse, there is an unproblematic representation of national identity, which is seen as homogeneous, fixed and stable. Yet, the nation constitutes an unfinished and contested terrain and imagining the nation is an on-going process. As Homi Bhabha (1990a, 1990b) argues that the idea of nation is continuously developing through the process of “narration”. This process allows marginalized or excluded identities or groups to contest continuously the boundaries of not only nations (Bhabha, 1990a: 1-7) but also any imagined community.¹¹

Postcolonial criticism, then, problematizes identity, challenging homogeneity and fixity of identity. Edward Said and Homi Bhabha celebrate cultural hybridity, rejecting the views of cultures and identities as monolithic and fixed. In *Culture and Imperialism*,

“the war against terror” and “the strategic cooptation of women’s rights” see Hunt (2002), Khattak (2002), Cooke (2002), Young (2003), and Jaggar (2003).

¹¹ For Bhabha, “writing the nation” involves a “double narrative movement” in which the people are both “the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on a pre-given or constituted historical origin or event” and at the same time “‘subjects’ of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence” (1990b: 297). Once the “double narrative movement” of nationalism articulated, there is a multidimensional identity in which individual identity intersects and interacts with the communal and national as a process that resists closure. This self-conscious “double-writing or dissemi-*nation*” is an uneven and incomplete production of meaning and value, composed of incommensurable demands and procedures.

Said argues that the national cultures of both the colonizer and the colonized are hybrid, not homogeneous. Said, as a “border intellectual”, can interpret “experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them coexisting and interacting with others” (1993: 32). In the dominant nationalist discourse what is essential for the notion of the national identity is its definition in opposition to the culturally “Other”. Nevertheless, as Said argues, “all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic” (1993: xxv). For Said, only by exploring our “intertwined histories” is there hope to counteract the destructive power of essentialist thinking that pits “us” against “them”.¹²

Bhabha also problematizes identity, breaking down the rigid Self/Other distinction. For Bhabha, “the postcolonial perspective ... attempts to revise those nationalist or ‘nativist’ pedagogies that set up the relation of Third and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The postcolonial perspective resists attempts to provide a holistic social explanation, forcing a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries” (1992: 47-48). Social identities are, then, not always compound and overdetermined, but they are unstable at their origins and incapable of being stabilized (Bhabha 1994b: 66-84). For subjects dwelling neither fully within the “First World” nor within the “Third”, the space of subjectivity is called “postcolonial” by Bhabha (1990b: 318). Suggesting that cultural or national identity is “ambivalent”, always in the process

¹² Said does not confront the question of why essentialist thinking grows all around the world. The logic that groups with “authentic” cultural heritage could claim the right to self-determination and self-government continues to inform national liberation struggles.

of formation and “always constituted within and not outside representation”, Bhabha recognizes the internal complexity of national identities (1990b: 291-322). Instead of seeing a diversity of “stable identities”, Bhabha sees interacting “positionalities”, constantly reshaped and always in flux. His idea of “hybridity” resists the Self/Other binary opposition and proposes that the Other is already within the Self.

The idea of “hybridity”, then, suggests that “binary oppositions” need to be replaced by a view that recognizes the mutual constitution of inside and outside, self and other. Both Said and Bhabha try to demonstrate that the marginalized “Other” has her/his own voice, which works towards subverting these essentialist classifications. At the same time, the idea of “hybridity” does not deny the existence of ethnic identity or of boundaries and differences.¹³ On the contrary, it sets out to investigate the formation, function, and effects of territorial demarcations.

With its emphasis on “hybridity”, postcolonial scholarship is a response to the need to overcome a crisis of understanding produced by the inability of old categories to account for the world. Postcolonial critics employ a distinctive understanding of identity/difference. They approach identities/differences as *relational, unstable and hybrid*. The (re)constitution of identity/difference is neither complete nor fixed. They shift attention from national/ethnic origin to subject position, insisting on a “politics of location” rather than the politics informed by fixed categories. This is due to their

¹³ Smith (1995) misinterprets “hybridity” as indicating something that rejects the traditions from which it springs. Yet, as Said (1993) and Bhabha (1990b) make clear, “hybridity” is not built upon the idea of the disappearance of independent ethnic cultural traditions and images but their continual interaction and mutual development. For instance, while the existence of Coca-Cola, blue jeans, McDonalds all over the world may indicate a cultural homogenization, cultural values or meanings associated with them differ from context to context as they are interpreted differently in disparate settings.

reconceptualization of the postcolonial subject as hybrid, who cannot be contained within fixed categories.

The notion of hybridity calls attention to the mutual construction of “colonizer” and “colonized”, “self” and “other”, which the dominant nationalist discourse fails to see. While the idea of national community has been based upon exclusions, hybridity allows negotiation of the multiplicity of identities, which result from “displacements”. In these respects, postcolonialism has contributed to the debates on the nature of political communities, providing a base for another way of understanding identity/difference, which goes beyond the simple positive/negative dichotomy. Postcolonial scholarship has the potential to get us beyond the binary thinking on identity/difference embedded in the dominant literature on nationalism and modernity.

Crucial to this study is the postcolonial argument that identities/differences are never fixed, stable, authentic and complete and that the boundaries of communal and individual identities are constantly being redefined and redrawn. As noted earlier, the idea of nation is continuously developing through the process of “narration” (Bhabha 1990a, 1990b) and it is this process which allows marginalized or excluded identities to challenge the boundaries of “imagined communities”. This perspective allows us to view that the struggles of social movements for recognition and full inclusion disrupt the myth of homogeneity of community through affirmation of internal differences. As we shall see in Chapter 5, Kurdish nationalism has challenged the dominant Turkish national narrative, revealing that the imagined community of the Turks was neither heterogeneous nor unified. Yet, social movements might also be implicated in the oppressive discourses and practices they seek to resist, subvert and transform. As this study shows social

movements themselves employ exclusionary discourses and practices to challenge the boundaries of political communities. While the Kurdish national movement has presented itself as unified, Kurds are internally divided along tribal, religious, linguistic, regional and gender lines as well as in terms of political affiliations (see Chapter 5). Also, will be discussed in Chapter 4, the Turkish feminist movement has ignored differences among women. Insisting on a common gendered oppression, Turkish feminists have privileged identities and interests of some women, while at the same time marginalizing other women.

In sum, postcolonial critics point to the pitfalls of anticolonial nationalism, identifying its ambivalent relationship to colonialism and its claims of authenticity. While postcolonial critics make clear that anti-colonial nationalisms, like Western colonial nationalisms, have depended on the invocation of essentialist communities, “invented” traditions and symbols, foundational myths, and as well as their defining “Others”, feminist critics argue that building communities involves disciplining women’s bodies, behaviour, and sexuality. Indeed, as we shall see below, feminist scholarship has revealed that all nationalisms are gendered and that the articulation of any communal identity/difference (national, ethnic, racial or religious) involves defining and regulating gender relations and constant monitoring of women’s behaviour.

3. Rethinking Nations and Nationalism: Gendering the Nation

All nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous ... in the sense of representing relations to political power and to the technologies of violence. ... [T]here is no single narrative of the nation. Different genders, classes, ethnicities and generations do not identify with,

or experience the myriad national formations in the same way; nationalisms are invented, performed and consumed in ways that do not follow a universal blueprint (Anne McClintock 1993: 61, 67).

Despite the attention given to the participation of some social groups, such as nationalist elites, in nationalist movements and nation-building projects, little scholarly attention has been paid to the ways in which women get involved and they have been implicated in nationalist projects. Gellner, for instance, views nations as the recent cultural “artefacts of *men's* convictions and loyalties and solidarities” (1983: 7, emphasis mine). According to Anderson, nations are “imagined communities” because they are always conceived as a deep, horizontal *comradeship* and it is this strong sense of *fraternity* (of nationalism) that helps explain the willingness of many people to kill and die for them (1991: 7).

This masculinist “narration of the nation” has been exposed and criticized by feminist scholars (Jayawardena 1986; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Kandiyoti 1991a; McClintock 1993; Yuval-Davis 1997). Most feminist theorists of nationalism concur with modernist theorists that nations and nationalisms are modern phenomena and that nations are constructions of our collective imaginations. Yet, they recognize not only the imagined/constructed/invented nature of nations and nationalisms but also their gendered nature. All nationalisms are “gendered” and “invented” to maintain and perpetuate masculine interests (McClintock 1993; Pettman 1996). As Cynthia Enloe puts it, “nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (1990: 44). The masculinist narratives of the nation also cast women as mothers of the nation, as “nationalist wombs” as they give birth and raise the future members of the nation (Enloe 1990: 54). The gendered nature of nationalism involves the further entrenchment of male and female norms, masculinity and femininity.

Feminist scholars of nationalism also make it clear that the regulation of gender is central to the articulation of national identity and difference. According to Anthias and Yuval-Davis, women have been implicated in nationalism in five ways: as biological reproducers of the members of national communities; as reproducers of the boundaries between different ethnic groups and nations (through restrictions on sexual and marital relations); as active producers and transmitters of the national culture; as signifiers of ethnic and/or national differences; as active participants in national struggles (1989: 7). Boundaries and borders of communities are policed and controlled through regulating women's bodies and sexuality. As women's bodies are seen to symbolize the boundaries of the nation, violating women's bodies is equated with violating national boundaries. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Kemalist project of nationalism represented the new "Turkish woman" not only as the symbol of the new secular Republic but also as an embodiment of the cultural essence of the new Turkish nation. Similarly, Kurdish nationalist discourses cast Kurdish women as mothers and active participants in the nationalist struggle as guerrillas and politicians (see Chapter 6).

Feminist theorists of nationalism also recognize the exclusionary and homogenizing character of nation-building projects. They concur with the scholars of nationalism that nationalism is about origins, loyalty, and belonging, but they also recognize that nationalism is both a divisive and a unifying force as it is simultaneously about inclusion and exclusion (Pettman 1996: 46). Constructing and/or imagining nations involves processes of boundary-drawing, and it is this drawing of the nation that produces boundaries, create an "us" versus "them", creates the outsider, the enemy (Pettman 1996: 47). Moreover, women are assigned particular roles in reproducing the boundaries

between different national communities. Women are viewed not only as delineators of national identity but also as embodiments of authenticity and transmitters of national culture and community values to future generations.

McClintock notes that nationalist discourses often employ the family as a metaphor, as it “offers ‘natural’ figure for sanctioning social *hierarchy* within a putative organic *unity* of interests” (1993: 63).¹⁴ The metaphor of family not only naturalizes hierarchical social distinctions but it also offers “a single genesis narrative for national history”. The invoking of the vocabulary of the family represents *historical change* as natural: “Since children ‘naturally’ progress into adults, projecting the family image on to national and imperial ‘Progress’ enabled what was often murderously violent change to be legitimized as the progressive unfolding of natural decree” (McClintock 1993: 64). Colonial, imperial as well as national interventions are seen in this light, as part of “an organic, non-revolutionary progression that naturally contained hierarchy within unity: paternal fathers ruling benignly over immature children” (*ibid.*). Within the Kemalist nationalist discourse, the national community is also described by invoking the vocabulary of the family. State is viewed as “the father” who would know the best for his children (“nation” or “people”), who would protect his children and would keep the family united.

As discussed earlier, national identities are often constructed in such a way that they are ambiguously placed between past and future. Drawing on Tom Nairn’s idea of nation as “the modern Janus” Deniz Kandiyoti (1991a: 431) describes nationalism both as

¹⁴ Anderson (1991), for instance, draws attention to nationalism’s appeal as a faith in an eternal life through membership of a nation. For him, the nation represents the continuity of the extended family from one generation to the next.

“a modern project that melts and transforms traditional attachments in favour of new identities and as a reaffirmation of authentic cultural values culled from the depths of a presumed communal past”. Within nationalist projects women represent both the past and the future because they are bearers of both authentic culture and future members of the community (Kandiyoti 1991a). According to McClintock, this “temporal anomaly within nationalism” is resolved by “figuring the contradiction as a ‘natural’ division of gender” (1993: 66). While women represented the authentic “body” of national tradition, embodying nationalism’s conservative principle of continuity, men are the progressive agent of modernity embodying nationalism’s progressive principle of discontinuity (McClintock 1993: 66). Since the modern was presented not as a break with the present but as return to authenticity, discontinuity is in fact presented as continuity. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the Kemalist nationalist project cast women and their bodies as representing both the *past* and the *future* of the Turkish nation.

Indeed, women’s bodies and sexuality have occupied a central place in the projects of modernization and nation-building in the postcolonial world. Women’s emancipation has been an integral part of the nationalist projects developed by male nationalist leaders. As discussed earlier, anti-colonial nationalisms display ambivalent dimensions. On the one hand, in order to modernize existing political and economic institutions along Western lines modernizing elites of anti-colonial national movements have accepted Western ideas of “progress”, “rationality”, “universality” and “science and technology”. On the other hand, in order to claim independence from Western domination, they asserted the *difference*, the *autonomous* identity of their “national culture”. In other words, they defined national difference in cultural terms, against the

West (Pettman 1996: 54). Thus, anti-colonial nationalisms divide the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the spiritual and the material (or inside/outside respectively) (Chatterjee 1991: 522). The material refers to the domain of the economy, state, and technology. This is the domain where Western superiority is accepted, and its institutions and technology are adopted. The spiritual, on the other hand, is the domain which bears the authentic marks of cultural identity. Anti-colonial nationalisms locate their national/cultural difference from the West in this “spiritual domain”, in the realm of women. Employing “spiritual/material” or “inside/outside” distinction, anticolonial nationalisms cast women as the bearers of national/cultural authenticity. For Chatterjee, however, the spiritual domain is, paradoxically, the domain where nationalist projects start to construct a modern national culture by “inventing traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), myths, symbols and memories and by “imagining” (Anderson 1991) a homogeneous nation. Thus, women’s bodies and sexuality become the material and discursive sites where the nation is imagined.

The discourse and practice of nationalism, indeed, display inherent contradictions and ambiguities, especially concerning women and their roles in society (Kandiyoti 1991a; Jayawardena 1986). Nationalism invites women to participate actively in nationalist movements and imprisons them within the nationalist cause (Kandiyoti (1991a: 431). Women are caught in the paradox of becoming liberated and empowered through the same force that simultaneously and continually marginalize them. Women often get marginalized within the polity despite constant confirmation of their central importance to the state and nationalist cause. For instance, in postcolonial states constitutional equality guaranteed to women has often been undermined by the duality

between family legislation and secular law. Family legislation, which regulates the “private realm”, undermines gender equality and disadvantage women (Kandiyoti 1991a). Further changes have also been made almost impossible by invocations of religion and/or by the identification of equal rights for women with betrayal of cultural values. As Chatterjee’s “inner/outer” argument shows, while nationalist projects introduce women to the public sphere as citizens, they often do not challenge existing gender relations and sex roles in the private realm of the family. Thus, while the public spheres of postcolonial states emerge as spaces where women are included, most of the time, male domination in the public sphere was ensured by male control over female sexuality. Thus, while nationalist projects can create the potential for new opportunities and new rights for women, they can just as easily limit possibilities for women.

There are also contradictions and paradoxes of trying to assert and entrench women’s rights through national liberation movements (Jayawardena 1986). The organicist understanding of nationalism often circumscribes women’s emancipation since women are allowed to articulate their interests only within the boundaries prescribed by the nationalist discourse (Kandiyoti 1991a). Nationalist discourse, then, both encourages and legitimizes and constrains women’s agency. Furthermore, male leaders of nationalist movements often condemn feminism as Western as well as divisive, asking women to wait until after the revolution. When feminists expose the masculinist narration of the nation and when criticize their own community, this is often seen as betrayal.¹⁵ Within

¹⁵ Jayawardena (1986) argues that feminism in the Third World is not a mere imitation of Western feminism but it is also the result of local historical contexts. Indeed, the question of whether local feminisms in non-Western contexts should be considered “indigenous” or “imported” lies at the heart of the debates concerning the nature of feminisms in the Middle East (see Abu-Lughod 2001).

this context, the question raised by Pettman (1996: 62) is important: how have feminisms engaged with nationalist projects? Have they sought to distance themselves from them?

In many contexts, women continue to articulate their interests in the language of nationalism. Both feminist scholars as well as activists call for women's empowerment to be pursued separately from nationalist goals (Kandiyoti 1991a; Pettman 1996). They assert the need for women to negotiate their rights outside the nationalist framework, which defines and dictate our imaginings, and which is used to legitimize to postpone women's demands. Kandiyoti (1991a) argues that as long as women are the signposts of national identity, they will never achieve full citizenship and equality. For Kandiyoti, the goal is to find a national identity that permits diversity and accommodates difference, without making women its captive. To make progress, women must be able to break the identities assigned to them by others (e.g. by masculinist national discourses) and take identities of their own, appropriate to their own situation. Women need to develop a new language to articulate a more inclusive and tolerant political community. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, different groups of women in Turkey participate in the struggles over boundaries and resist the parameters of the community identity and membership as defined by men.

The regulation of gender is, in fact, important in the articulation of not only national identity/difference but also other communal identity/difference(s) such as racial, ethnic, tribal and religious. Control of women's bodies and sexuality is crucial for both the symbolic and material preservation and reproduction of community. Because states and national, ethnic and religious communities are often concerned about women's sexual purity, they put restrictions on women's sexual and marital relations. States play a

crucial role in the regulation of gender and sexuality. Indeed, a great deal of feminist effort has been directed at exposing the ways in which communities and states construct and regulate membership in communities and the centrality of gender to these constructions and regulations. Feminist scholars and activists make visible the exclusions that characterize the so-called homogeneous communities. As we shall see in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have challenged the state feminism of Kemalism and have exposed the gendered nature of national, ethnic and religious communities in Turkey.

Yet, contemporary identity-based social movements, including feminisms, have also deployed the discourse of community which has offered a basis for collective mobilization. By invoking the discourse of community, these movements have been able to mobilize activism and engage the public in the alternative discourses they articulate. Communities have served as sites of resistances for many contemporary social movements, which are fighting against structures of domination and unequal power relations. When the discourse of community was invoked, it was assumed that there was common essence and identity, shared experience, oppression, political interests and goals. As will be discussed in the next section, some scholars and activists have pointed to racism, classism, sexism and other exclusions entailed in attempts to constitute not only nations but also social movements as communities. Indeed, in their efforts to produce unity and generate activism, social movements have ended up universalizing a particular identity. As argued in Chapter 1, social movements as communities can be sites not only of effective resistances and emancipation but of oppression, marginalization, and cooptation. Inclusionary and democratic character of contemporary social movements

cannot be assumed but must be explored in each context. Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, the Turkish feminist movement in spite of its liberating potential also displays homogenizing, authoritarian, and exclusionary tendencies.

Feminist theorists and activists are not unaware of this. They are critical of contemporary social movements, including feminisms, for depending on images of community, on stories of common experiences and oppression, presuming an already established identities and demands. They insist that no social conflict, not class nor gender, sexual, ethnic, religious conflict carries any social and political primacy. Feminist scholars have also questioned the very possibility of a unified, fixed, authentic identity and community. The self-other oppositions on which notions of authenticity depend are in fact constitutive of one another. Therefore, the self is never pure but always already incorporates the other. In this they have drawn on poststructuralist and postcolonial literatures and ideas.

In sum, the works of feminist and postcolonial critics have pointed to the exclusionary effect of the invocation of community by nationalist discourses and practices. While postcolonial scholars have criticized the notion of *fixed* and *homogeneous* national identity, arguing that identity/difference is (re)constituted *relationally*, feminist critics have exposed the gendered nature of nationalist projects arguing that women's bodies and sexuality are regulated to demarcate communal boundaries and to preserve communal identity/difference. Postcolonial and feminist criticisms contribute to the literature on nationalism and to the dominant understanding of nationalist discourses and practices by problematizing identity/difference, allowing us to rethink the complex issues of national identity and their relation to gender difference.

4. Feminisms and the Politics of identity/difference

As argued in Chapter 1, contemporary social movements, including feminisms, offer an important challenge to the exclusions of modern discourses and practices. They also reveal the exclusions and inclusions that underlie homogenous national communities. Feminist movements expose the gendered nature of nationalisms and the construction and regulation of gender identities by nationalist discourses and practices. Yet, as argued above, contemporary social movements, including feminist movements, have themselves invoked community in their struggles and resistances against oppressive discourses and practices. As feminist movements view gender as the organizing principles of all societies, they have come to depend on the notion of a community, assuming already established identities, demands and common oppression. They have privileged gender conflict over other social conflicts such as ethnic, religious, racial, class or sexual. Thus, they have ignored the existing differences and unequal power relations among women.

This is not true of all feminist theorizing. Some American feminists of colour have raised serious doubts about any singular identity category, including gender, as an organizing principle for social and political change (see hooks 1984; Collins 1991). This feminist criticism has been mainly concerned with exposing classism and racism of white middle-class American feminists. African-American and other feminists of colour have criticized white, middle class radical and liberal feminisms focusing just on female “otherness” or “difference” and ignoring the differences among women. They have called into question the notion of “universal sisterhood”, criticizing the second-wave radical feminists for assuming that their ideals, experiences, oppression, and demands are

universal. They have viewed the mainstream notion of “woman” as the universalization of the experiences of white, urban, middle-class women, arguing that this universalization served to erase the realities and interwoven oppression of women of colour and poor women. Universalizing “women” and universalizing a particular worldview exclude, silence, and disadvantage marginalized women. Also, they have emphasized the necessity of incorporating race, culture, class, ethnicity and sexuality into feminist analysis.

bell hooks (1984) argues that the predominant notion of “universal sisterhood”, based on the idea of “common oppression”, was actually advanced by white, middle class American women to accommodate their needs, while, at the same time, excluding the needs and concerns of both minority and working-class women. Thus, for hooks, the notion of “universal sisterhood” is exclusive rather than inclusive. As “sexism, racism and classism divide women from one another”, hooks (1984: 61-65) suggests that rather than the idea of “common oppression”, the notion of “sisterhood” should be based on the common will of all women to eliminate sexism, racism, and classism. In order to have true “solidarity” or a true “sisterhood”, women of various ethnic backgrounds must come together to eliminate racism and classism within the feminist movement. In other words, white middle class women must be willing to join the feminist movement and not necessarily lead it. Thus, true sisterhood cannot be achieved until the issues of race and class become a predominant feature of the feminist movement. Feminists of different persuasions must start recognizing and debating over “differences among women”, forging new identities and bonds of solidarity, formulating new agendas and strategies to fight against what Collins (1991: 222) calls “a system of interlocking race, class, and gender oppression”. Furthermore, controlled confrontation is necessary for the feminist

movement to proceed forward and to achieve true “sisterhood”. In feminist movements “there is need for diversity, disagreement, and difference if we are to grow” and that “women do not need to eradicate differences to feel solidarity” (hooks 1984: 64-65).

A number of Third World feminists have taken the criticisms levelled by American feminists of colour to new directions. Third World feminist scholars, like Chandra Mohanty¹⁶, Aihwa Ong, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Marnia Lazreg, Shirin Rai and Lila Abu-Lughod, have criticized Western feminist scholarship for generalizing and employing Eurocentric thought when referring to the experiences of Third World women. These scholars have sought to “decolonize feminism”, exposing the intersections between colonial/Orientalist discourse and feminist representations of non-Western women, especially in “women in development” literature (Ong 1988; Lazreg 1990b; Mohanty 1991b). Analyzing Western feminist writings on “women in development”, Mohanty (1991b), for instance, reveals that they construct or represent “Third World women” as a unitary, homogeneous group, ignoring differences among women which are based on religion, class, sexuality, and history. Rather, “Third World women” constitute a *political category* which transcends geographic borders as “Third World women” do not only live in the developing non-Western societies, but also at the margins of the developed Western societies.

From this perspective, Western feminism, which is born as a post-Enlightenment intellectual current, suffers from the limitations inherent in Orientalist thinking. Legal,

¹⁶ Mohanty’s article, titled “Under Western Eyes”, has been foundational in critiquing hegemonic Western feminisms. In this article, Mohanty argues that “any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of ‘third world feminisms’ must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of “Western” feminisms; the formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies”.

economic, cultural, religious, and familial structures of non-Western societies are treated as phenomena to be judged by Western standards (Ong 1988). Similarly, some “liberated” Western feminists judge “non-civilized”, “non-liberated” Third World women according to Western norms, values and standards. As Ong (1988: 80) observes, “for feminists looking overseas, the non-feminist other is not so much the patriarchy as the non-Western woman”.

Feminist Orientalism¹⁷ manifests itself in a tendency to universalize and create a monolithic, unitary “other”, that is the “Third World women”, without paying any attention to particularities of experiences of women in non-Western societies, to material and historical differences between these women, and to the conditions created by the legacy of colonialism and anti-colonial nationalist movements and projects. Feminist Orientalist thinking, for instance, takes “honour killings” and makes them the representative of the exploitation and oppression of *all* Third World women. The “Third World woman”, thus, becomes yet another *object* of Western knowledge (Mohanty 1991b; Lazreg 1990a). Third World women lose their *agency* as they are portrayed as weak, obedient and passive victims of barbaric and primitive practices. In other words, Western feminist scholarship, by employing a de-contextualized, a-historical analytical category of “Third World woman”, distorts women’s multiple realities and freezes Third World women in time, space, and history (Mohanty 1991a: 6). While Western feminists are the true “subjects” of history, Third World women “never rise above the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status” (Mohanty 1991b: 71).

¹⁷ I have borrowed this term from Frederique Apffel-Marglin and Suzanne Simon (1994).

Through this Orientalist “othering” process, Western women feel self-actualized through their accomplishments when compared to the plight of Third World women. By portraying the “Third World” (i.e. non-Euro-American) female “Other” as tradition-bound, ignorant, passive and victimized, some Western feminists implicitly and explicitly position themselves as “empowered” and “liberated”. Judging these women according to Western norms and values, Western feminist scholarship also implicitly shares the Orientalist assumption that “traditional” and “non-liberated” “Third World women” need to be “civilized” and “developed” to be more like Western women, who are educated, modern, free and have control over their own bodies (Mohanty 1991b: 56).

It is important to note that not *all* Western feminists or feminisms adopt and perpetuate an Orientalist discourse. Furthermore, colonial and/or Orientalist discourses have been adopted and perpetuated not only by some Western feminists, but also by some Third World women of privileged backgrounds. As Lazreg (1990) observes, the tendency to homogenize and essentialize identities and complexities of the lives of “third world women” can also be discerned in the writings of some third world feminist and non-feminist scholars who were trained in the West and who teach in Western universities.¹⁸ Thus, some Third World elite women have also contributed to the perpetuation of a feminist Orientalist discourse.

¹⁸ Lazreg notes that most writings on women in the Middle East by both Western and indigenous scholars trained in the West invoke religion as the main cause of gender inequality, portraying women as powerless victims forced to live by the tenets of Islam (1990a: 14). She calls for a new approach which would historicize the relationship between gender and religion, placing religion within a historical framework by focusing on colonialism, social and economic development policies, and democratization which interact with religion in complex ways.

A number of Third World feminists and American feminists of colour, then, have criticized white, middle-class, radical and liberal feminisms for not defining racism, colonialism and imperialism as major feminist issues. Western feminisms privilege a struggle against gender discrimination, assuming that all women, across cultures and classes, share a common oppression based on their gender. The assumption of “women” as an already constituted, homogeneous group with identical interests and desires, shared oppression regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, or contradictions, implies a notion of gender difference, or even patriarchy, which can be applied universally and cross-culturally. The use of “women” as a group, as a stable category of analysis is problematic as it is based on an ahistorical assumption of universal gender subordination (Mohanty 1991b: 64). As Mohanty reminds us we need to focus on how the category of “women” is constructed in a variety of political contexts because “[i]t is only by understanding the contradictions inherent in women’s location within various structures that effective political action and challenges can be devised” (Mohanty 1991b: 66). By contextualizing their analysis, and by rethinking the available universalist, ahistorical categories and concepts, Western feminists would see that the common oppressor is sometimes the post-colonial state¹⁹ or even some Western feminists who impose their experiences, values, and views of society, family and politics on “Third World women”.

By refusing the universality of gender oppression, Third World feminists contest the notion of “global sisterhood” based on a shared victimization. They prefer women to

¹⁹ Within the context of post-colonial states, women often become symbols of the nation and its resistance to westernization (e.g. the “new veiling” in Algeria). This context certainly defines and constrains women’s political agency as well as the strategies they would employ for empowerment. However, it does not render women as passive victims. As noted above, postcolonial feminists criticize the Orientalist tendency of Western feminist scholarship which tends to objectify “Third World women” as passive victims.

unite or bond based on their solidarity, so that “sisterhood” can become a political tool, rather than a source of support (hooks 1984: 62). Third World feminists stress that colonialism, race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and other identities structure the nature and experience of gender identities and relations. These divisions must be recognized within feminist movements. In other words, multiple systems of oppression (such as sexism, racism, Orientalism, classism, heterosexism) intersect together in different ways in different contexts to produce and shape historically specific identities and relations of power as well as resistances. It is important to recognize the diversity of women’s experiences, of the Orientalist nature of much Western feminist theorizing and practice, of the traps of shared victimization, and of the many power structures that define and dominate politics and gender identities and relations.

Postcolonial feminists, then, have criticized Western feminist scholars and activists for perpetuating a colonial discourse which represents Third world women as an undifferentiated “Other”, oppressed by both gender and Third world underdevelopment (Mohanty 1991b). They have pointed to the complex relationships interconnecting anti-colonial nationalisms, modernity, feminism and the post-colonial state.²⁰ They have criticized those analyses which ignore the impact of class, race, ethnicity, religion and most importantly the impact of colonialism on the construction of identities of women in the developing world (Mohanty 1991b; Ong 1988; Lazreg 1990a).

We can draw at least two important conclusions from the above discussion for this dissertation. Feminists of colour and Third World feminist scholarship make it clear that to imagine “women” as a group or a community is to repress differences among

²⁰ See, for instance, Jayawardena (1986); Kandiyoti (1991a, 1991b); Chhachhi (1991); Badran (1991); Moghadam (1994); Rai (1996); and Abu-Lughod (1998).

women and to accept racism, classism, and heterosexism within a feminist movement, which cannot address the concerns of “other” women. Secondly, and most importantly, in feminist and non-feminist Orientalist thought, non-Western women’s status in society is used to measure that society’s progress, its modernity and level of “civilization”. In colonial Egypt the *veil* became the symbol of women’s oppression in the narratives of Western travelers, historians and colonizers. In India, *sati* (see Spivak 1988; Mani 1990) played a similar role to that of *veil* in Egypt. Indeed, as argued earlier, women have had occupied a central place in the debates over what is “modern” and “civilized” and what is “traditional”. Even in countries which were not colonized, such as Turkey and Iran, the perceived “backwardness” of their respective societies as opposed to European/Western hegemony, created a terrain for heated debates on civilization, progress, cultural authenticity. Within these debates as well as in modernizing and/or civilizing projects women’s bodies have become the battleground, the site where new political communities have been imagined. As we will see in the next chapter, it was through the bodies of unveiled women that the new modernizing Turkish state articulated its difference from the previous Ottoman order.

Criticisms levelled against white middle class Western feminist discourses and practices opened up a space within academic feminism, where feminists of different persuasions have started to debate over “differences among women”. Donna Haraway (1990) discusses the transformation academic feminism has been undergoing as a result of the interventions of feminists of colour and Third World feminists. She asserts that feminists “do not need totality in order to work well. The feminist dream of a common language, like all dreams for a perfectly true language, of a perfectly faithful naming of

experience, is a *totalizing* and *imperialist* one” (1990: 215, emphasis mine). Thus, drawing from poststructural scholarship and from the writings of Third world feminists and feminists of colour, some Western feminists have started to point to the problems associated with essentialist, romanticized and homogenizing invocations of identity/difference and community.

In sum, a dialogue between postcolonial and feminist perspectives is significant as it allows us to view identity/difference and imagining/building community as a contested project. Indeed, these bodies of literature shift the focus from community as a bounded, homogeneous unity to a community as a contested, ongoing process. Both perspectives problematize identity/difference, creating opportunities to rethink the formation of identity/difference and multiple relations of power that shape them. Indeed, drawing from postcolonial scholarship many scholars have questioned the very possibility of unity, fixity, authenticity and homogeneity of identity and community. Communities are always shifting, transforming and partial. Identities are neither given nor fixed nor stable but always constructed in relation to an “Other”.

Some feminist scholars have contested those perspectives that view gender identity/difference as fixed and unchanging. Instead, they have emphasized that the construction of identities as feminine and masculine is an ongoing and interrelated process. While postmodern feminist theorists deconstruct²¹ gender identities rather than

²¹ Feminists, like Seyla Benhabib (1991), attacked the postmodern commitment to “decenter the subject”. Benhabib (1991: 139-140) argued that this commitment is not compatible with the goals of feminism since the very project of women’s emancipation is unthinkable without a regulative principle of agency and selfhood. Deconstruction, then, may perpetuate the silence and invisibility of women. Similarly, Alcoff (1988) argued that postmodernist deconstruction reduces the category of “women” to non-existence, which has been the point of departure for any feminist theory and politics.

reconstructing them, there are feminist scholars, like Linda Alcoff, Donna Haraway and Iris Young, who advocate undertaking “situated” efforts to articulate “partial” or “situated” political projects or narratives, rather than universalizing, homogenizing, and normalizing grand narratives. While I agree with these scholars, following Gayatri Spivak (1988: 206-207), I argue that *temporary* adoption of “strategic essentialism” may be necessary in certain contexts in order to be able to challenge dominant discourses and imposed identities. While the creation of an essentialist identity necessarily involves the creation of an “other”, an “outsider” or even an “enemy”, it may also foster a sense of dignity, giving a sense of self-worth to a group of people who has been oppressed by a dominant “Other”. While essentialisms adopted by dominant groups may perpetuate existing hierarchical and oppressive relations, the adoption of “strategic essentialism” temporarily may empower some marginalized or excluded groups. It is, then, important not to dismiss social and political movements that often make strategic and deliberate choices and adopt essentialism (Jhappan 1996). The context within which these movements are situated must be understood in order to be able to account for their strategic choices.

“Strategic essentialism”, then, could be used, albeit only temporarily, as an effective and necessary political strategy to resist oppression, assimilation and invisibility and to make political demands and claims to achieve recognition. It might be crucial for some feminist movements or groups, such as Kurdish feminists in Turkey (see Chapter 5), to invoke “strategic essentialism” in order to expose the existing exclusions within the Turkish feminist movement and make political demands for recognition and inclusion. Yet, it is also crucial to continually contextualize any strategically essentialized identity

in order to prevent it from being reified, privileged, normalized or dominant. It is important to be aware of the limits of strategically essentialist identities to prevent them from becoming expressions of “the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded” (Castells 1997: 9).

As argued in Chapter 1, contemporary social movements, including feminisms, point to the homogenizing and disciplining characteristic of political communities. Yet, in their efforts to produce unity and to generate activism, these movements have themselves ended up invoking the discourse of community and universalizing a particular identity or prioritizing one identity/difference over the rest. Feminist movements have often articulated a common discourse and an identity, often conflating interests and identities of one group of women with the interests and identities of *all* women. They have failed to acknowledge and accommodate the diversity of women’s experiences, interests and demands, stemming from their diverse locations in society. Thus, while feminisms raise serious questions about the supposed homogeneity of national communities and “false universalism” of communitarian discourses, they often generate communal discourses, ignoring or marginalizing particularities of some women. This dissertation argues that in the process of articulation of a vision of a new community, feminist social movements must address the differences within and among various groups of women and need to develop strategies to reconcile these differences. Collaborations among women on different issues may foster some understanding and respect. Commonality in experience may help women build bridges with each other. As argued in Chapter 1, commonality is not pre-given, but is rather discursively constructed within

social movements and through interactions and negotiations with the state and other movements.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the link between modernity and nationalism, one of the most powerful narratives of modernity. Drawing on the works of feminist and postcolonial scholars the chapter demonstrated the modern, “imagined”, “invented”, exclusionary, homogenizing, disciplining, and “gendered” character of nations and nationalisms. In other words, constructing and/or imagining nations and nation-building projects involve processes of boundary-making, homogenization, gendered inclusions and exclusions, and processes of universalization of certain particularities at the expense of others. Nationalisms, whether Western or anti-colonial, describe and impose boundaries, leaving some people inside and others outside the political community. Indeed, homogenizing, universalizing and disciplining character of community has also been deployed in the (counter-)narratives and practices of anticolonial nationalisms and of contemporary social movements, including feminisms. Following feminist scholars of nationalism, this chapter also pointed to the centrality of the questions of gender to the regulation of membership in national communities. The analysis of the links between gender and nation is important as all nationalisms are gendered and the articulation of national communal identity/difference depends on the regulation and control of gender identities and relations. The next chapter examines the Kemalist nationalist discourse and its construction and imagination of “Turkish women”.

CHAPTER III: TURKISH MODERNITY, KEMALISM AND “THE WOMAN QUESTION”

Having clarified some of the theoretical issues at stake in the first two chapters, this chapter discusses the trajectory of Turkish modernization. In order to better understand the significance of the rise of social movements, in particular the feminist movement(s) in Turkey, this chapter begins by looking at the modernizing/Westernizing reforms and the discourses of Ottoman/Turkish women in the late Ottoman Empire. These set the stage for a discussion of the Kemalist project of modernity, focusing in particular on the Kemalist nationalist discourse and its representation of women as symbols of the secular Republic and the Turkish nation. The chapter argues that the Kemalist project of modernity defined Turkish national identity through the “othering” of Muslim identity. Kemalism pushed Islam out of the public sphere, by characterizing it as traditional, backward and oppressive, especially in its view of women.¹

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on the late Ottoman period, especially the *Tanzimat* reforms, which laid a base for the future modernizing/Westernizing reforms of the Kemalists after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The intellectual debates and the political ideas that were circulating in the late Ottoman period are also analyzed, as they formed the background against which the Kemalist elite developed their understanding of modernity and nationalism. The second section focuses on the “woman question” in the late Ottoman Empire. It provides

¹ It is important to note that the Kemalist project of modernity not only constructed Islam but also non-Muslim minorities (*azınlıklar*) – Armenians, Greeks and Jews – as its “Others”. The Kemalist nationalist discourse also pushed ethnic identities/differences (such as Kurdish) out of the public sphere.

a brief discussion of the discourses of the male reformist intellectuals and elite Ottoman women who criticized the subordinate position of women in the family and advocated the emancipation of women. The third section focuses on the Kemalist project of modernity and nation-building, examining the ways in which the Kemalists imagined/constructed the Turkish nation and represented “the Turkish woman”. This section also provides a brief introduction to the political context of pre-1980 Turkey, which will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

1. Modernization and Nationalism in the Late Ottoman Empire

Benedict Anderson emphasized that “[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (1991: 6). This statement raises the important question of how and why a nation is constructed/imagined in one way rather in another. In other words, the question is not only if a national history and traditions are invented, or if nationalism invents nations, but also why a nation is imagined in one way, rather than another, and why one myth, rather than another, is rediscovered or invented. Some scholars point to the existing national images, ideas and foundational myths, symbols and traditions that enable and constrain imaginations of nations and narrations of national identities.² This process of selective *forgetting* and *remembering* of certain histories, traditions and symbols is important in imagining nations. The process of nation-building is both unifying and divisive, as it is simultaneously about inclusion and exclusion (Pettman 1996: 46). While nationalisms

² For instance, Anthony Smith (1986), point to the pre-modern ethnic ties, traditions and myths which determine how a nation may be imagined.

remember/invent traditions and histories and produce and reproduce the boundaries of the nation, they simultaneously construct the “Other”.

To understand why the Kemalist elites constructed the Turkish nation and the images of women in one way rather than another, it is crucial to understand the social structure of the Ottoman Empire. Although it is usually argued that the foundation of the Turkish Republic represented a radical break with the Ottoman period, the political ideas and administrative practices and institutions that formed the new Republic can be traced back to the late Ottoman Empire. Starting with the *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876), Ottoman statesmen started to adapt Western ideas and institutions, such as representative government and secularism, which laid the basis for the Turkish Republic. Indeed, the *Tanzimat* reforms and the short experiments with parliamentary and constitutional government provided the ideas and practices on which the new Republic could build.³ More importantly for this thesis, the Republican elite’s understanding of nationalism had its roots in the late Ottoman Empire. Within this context, it is especially important to understand the Ottoman *millet system*.

The Ottoman “Millet System” and the Tanzimat Reforms

The Kemalist modern project sought to transform an empire with ethnic, religious, linguistic, and geographical diversity into an “indivisible” republic. The administrative structure within which different religious communities (*millets*) had lived under the

³ For instance, Namık Kemal, one of the Young Ottoman intellectuals, had insisted on the virtues of popular sovereignty – viewing people as the source of legitimacy and power. See Mardin (1962: 293, 301-302).

Ottoman rule was known as the *millet system*.⁴ The Ottoman administrators developed the *millet system* to deal with ethnic, religious and linguistic difference as the Empire had a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic population.⁵ For the Ottoman administrators, the main dividing line in society was religion. Under the *millet system*, the population was divided into four major *millets*: the Greek Orthodox *millet*, the Gregorian Armenian *millet*, the Jewish *millet*, and the Muslim *millet*.⁶ Within these communities of believers, there were ethnic, linguistic and tribal diversities.⁷ While all the *millets* within the empire were subject to the Ottoman criminal code, the *millet system* respected and recognized the legal traditions and communal practices of each *millet*, especially in matters of personal status (Davison 1963: 13). Each *millet*, represented by its communal leader (highest-ranking clergy like a patriarch or a rabbi), had autonomy in religious matters as well as control over its communal affairs such as education, marriage, divorce, health, inheritance and death. Communal religious leaders held not only religious but also civil authority; they were responsible for collecting taxes and other secular duties in their respective communities (Hanioglu 2002). Also, they built a bridge between their communities and the Ottoman polity.

The *millet system*, then, recognized religious traditions and practices of different communities and guaranteed their autonomy. Yet, the notion that religion constituted the main source of difference among *millets* also entailed a relation of dominance. While the

⁴ In the Ottoman administrative system the term *millet* (nation) did not refer to modern nations but to religious communities.

⁵ For more on the Ottoman *millet system* see Karpas (1982); Braude (1982); Braude and Lewis (1982); Kunt (1982).

⁶ A Protestant *millet*, composed largely of Armenians, was recognized in 1850 with an imperial decree (Davison 1963: 122).

⁷ For instance, the Greek Orthodox *millet* included Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Orthodox Albanians, Rumanians, and members of the Orthodox Church.

Ottomans were tolerant of other religions, Muslims were the ruling *millet* (*millet-i hâkime*) and thus had certain privileges, which the others did not have. The *millet system* thus guaranteed non-Muslim *millets* a great deal of autonomy on the condition that they recognized the superiority and dominance of the Ottoman Muslims and paid higher taxes (Braude and Lewis 1982: 5).⁸ Also, while the *millet system* guaranteed a great deal of communal autonomy, it strictly segregated the non-Muslims from the Muslims, by imposing certain restrictions on non-Muslim subject *millets*. For instance, the system, maintained a distinction between the *millets* by regulating dress codes (Braude and Lewis 1982: 5-6). Dress codes not only identified communal identities/differences among *millets* but also in social status, thus marking inequalities in the polity.

The gradual decline of the military and economic power of the Ottoman Empire and the simultaneous progress of Europe economically and militarily, generated by the industrial revolution, forced the Ottoman administrators to reform the social and political structure of the Empire, to create new institutions and to adapt Western techniques. The reforms introduced by Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) at the end of the eighteenth century were followed by an extensive reform program initiated by Sultan Mahmut II (1808-1839) and then by the *Tanzimat* reformers throughout the nineteenth century.⁹ Starting with Mahmut II, modernization entailed a major re-structuring and reorganization of such main institutions of the Ottoman Empire as the military, education and provincial

⁸ While non-Muslim *millets* had to pay higher taxes, Karpas argues that social ranking and tax status of Ottoman subjects were largely determined on the basis of services performed to the Empire, rather than strictly on religion (1982: 149-150). Christians who performed such services to the Empire as security, road and bridge maintenance were exempt from taxes.

⁹ Selim III had set up new military and naval schools with the intention of westernizing the technical equipment of the military and the training of the army and naval officers (Lewis 1968: 56-60).

administration.¹⁰ These reforms marked the first step towards the break-up of old institutions of the Empire and the reorganization and Westernization of the existing social and political order. These profound changes modernized the army, the bureaucracy, and the education system, and altered the legal system, the communal organization, and eventually the social structure and leadership of the *millets* (Karpas 1982: 152).

The modernized bureaucracy Mahmut II began to create assumed a leading role in the *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876), which was a period of reform, reorganization and Westernization in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire that culminated in the promulgation of the first Ottoman Constitution in 1876. The *Tanzimat* reformers aimed to preserve the unity and central control of an empire, adversely affected by military defeats, territorial losses, economic stagnation and ethnic-nationalist struggles (Davison 1963: 32-33).¹¹ Indeed, growing nationalism among the non-Muslim *millets* of the

¹⁰ Mahmut II's reform program included reforms in the fields of military, provincial administration and education (Lewis 1968: 76-106; Davison 1963: 25-36). He abolished the Janissaries (1826) and formed a new army (*Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*) with modern training and weaponry. He founded a medical school where the language of instruction was French. He also restored and strengthened the authority of the central government over the provinces, curbing the power and autonomy gained by the provincial notables through the *Sened-i İttifak* (Contract of Alliance) of 1808. Mahmud II's reforms in government and administration and his centralization policies involved the reorganization and modernization of the internal administration of the Empire, which was achieved by the abolishment of the military fiefs (*tumars*) in 1831 (Lewis 1968: 90). Mahmut II also introduced social and cultural changes. A new head-gear, the Fez, replaced all other forms of head-gear, and robes and slippers gave way to frockcoats and capes, trousers and black leather boots (Lewis 1968: 102). He also founded the first official newspaper in Turkish (*Takvim-i Vekayi*) (Lewis 1968: 94-95).

¹¹ At the end of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries the Empire faced with the problem of rising nationalisms among the various non-Muslim peoples. Nationalist struggles, often supported by European powers, started first among the Balkan peoples, with the Serbian (1804) and Greek revolts (1821), and gradually spread to the other communities of the Empire, including the Muslim groups. The defeat in the Russian war of 1877-78 put an end to the Ottoman rule in the Balkans and with the Berlin

Empire made the functioning of the *millet system* increasingly difficult. Thus, through the *Tanzimat* reforms, Ottoman administrators tried to unite diverse ethnic and religious elements around the notion of Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) – which emphasized the equality of all Ottoman subjects living in Ottoman territories regardless of their language or religious convictions. The Imperial Rescript of Gülhane of 1839 (*Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu*) introduced the concepts of security of life, honour and property, fair and public trial, and equality to all Ottoman subjects. It also promised a tax and military conscription reforms (see Davison 1963: 39-43; Berkes 1964: 152-153). The 1856 Rescript of Reform (*Islahat Fermanı*)¹² restated and further advanced the guarantees of the Rescript of Gülhane by declaring all Ottoman subjects, Muslim and non-Muslim, as equal, regardless of their faith and language, and specifying the ways in which the complete equality of non-Muslim subjects would be guaranteed.¹³

The Rescript of Reform and then the Ottoman Citizenship Law of January 1869 created a modern status for Ottoman subjects¹⁴ (Davison 1963: 262-264; Karpát 1982:

Treaty of 1878 a series of new independent states, such as Serbia and Romania, had been established. Bulgarians declared independence in 1908 and the Greeks in 1912.

¹² Davison (1963: 52-54) argues that the Rescript of Reform of 1856 was aimed not only at domestic reform but also at European opinion. The pressures exerted by the European powers for securing the rights of Christians were one of the important reasons for the *Tanzimat* administrators to issue this reform decree. Muslims viewed it as the “edict of concessions” (*imtiyaz fermanı*). The *Tanzimat* administrators first considered the *millet* reforms and focused on the status of the non-Muslims in the Empire because the European powers had insisted on Christian rights, and this insistence had provided them with a pretext for interference in Ottoman affairs (Davison 1963: 92-93).

¹³ The Rescript of 1856 carried a stipulation that the *millets* should be allowed to reform themselves. As Karpát (1982: 164) argues, one of the key features of the *millet reform* was “to allow laymen, mainly merchants and craftsmen, to participate in the election of their patriarchs and in the administration of the reconstituted *millet*”.

¹⁴ The law stipulated that all people residing in Ottoman territory were to be considered Ottoman subjects unless they could prove the contrary and that no Ottoman subject might become a citizen of another state without the preliminary consent of the government.

162). The status, rights and duties of an individual were no longer rooted in his/her membership in a religious community (*millet*) but were derived from his/her citizenship in the Empire and his/her allegiance to its government (Davison 1963: 8). *Tanzimat* reformers endorsed the notion of Ottoman nationality through the extension of equal rights, mixed education for Muslims and non-Muslims and curtailment of religious influence. As Davison (see 1963: 262-264) argues, “superficially the new law seemed only to be a step in the direction of secularization and Osmanlılık. It substituted modern political definitions of nationality and naturalization for the old criterion of conversion of Islam. So the empire moved toward Europe’s secular standards.”¹⁵ According to Berkes,

According to the *Tanzimat* statesmen, the *millet* privileges that were of a purely religious nature would be preserved as they concerned the freedom of conscience, but those relating to civil and judicial affairs ought to be eliminated as incompatible with the uniform execution of the reforms. The Ottoman state could be secularized only when the *millets* became religious congregations (*cemaat*) and each Ottoman subject was individually responsible and equal before the laws. Then the Şeriat would cease to be the basic law. It would remain only as the private law of the Muslims while the state would be administered according to newly enacted administrative, procedural, criminal, civil, and commercial codes (1964: 154).

Although the *Tanzimat* statesmen aimed to reorganize and reform the *millet* system, they in fact helped undermine the traditional society of the Empire. While the reforms opened up new job possibilities for the members of the non-Muslim *millets* in the

Non-Muslim merchants often accepted foreign citizenship until the introduction of this law; European powers often ensured foreign protection to non-Muslim Ottoman subjects who had business relations with them.

¹⁵ The *Tanzimat* period also led to the creation of what Davison (1963: 405) “a fatal dualism” of European and Ottoman institutions side by side in every field of life in the Empire. Whether it was in political field, or administration or legal system, or educational system, or social life, there were two sets of institutions. For more on the beginnings of secularism and modernization in the Ottoman Empire, see Berkes (1964 chapters 4, 5, 6).

administrative system of the Empire, they also marked the end of the Ottoman *millet system* by undermining traditional communal privileges and the power of autonomous communities (Davison 1963: 132-135). Nor did the *millet* reforms promote the idea of Ottomanism among the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. Rather, by allowing laymen to participate in the administration of their *millets*, they undermined the power of the religious communal leaders, loyal to the Ottoman state (Davison 1963: 132). In fact, both the religious and the secular communal leaders were opposed to the reforms, which threatened the established Ottoman order and thus their power and autonomy (Lewis 1968: 62). The efforts of the *Tanzimat* statesmen thus failed as the reforms allowed laymen, who were more *nationalistic* than the clergy, to assume control over their community affairs.¹⁶ The reforms created the conditions that facilitated the rise of ethnic movements and thus the ultimate demise of the *millet system* and the Ottoman Empire.

The *Tanzimat* period was not without an opposition movement. A new bureaucratic intelligentsia, created as a result of Mahmut II's and early *Tanzimat* reforms, formed an opposition movement called the Young Ottomans in 1856, led by Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, Şinasi and Ali Suavi. The Young Ottomans were critical of the policies and autocratic rule of the Porte. While they were not against Westernization, they criticized the leading reformers of the time, Ali and Fuad Paşas, for ignoring Islamic tradition and abandoning the *Şeriat* (the Islamic law), which, for them, contained the principles of democracy and justice. They were also against increasing European involvement in the domestic affairs of the Empire. They promoted a constitutional and representative regime, grounded in Islam, to curb the autocratic practices of the

¹⁶ For the efforts of the *Tanzimat* statesmen to reform non-Muslim *millets*, see Davison (1963: 114-135).

government. For them, the power of the Sultan had to be limited by a constitution. They claimed that constitutionalism and parliamentary government was compatible with Islamic law and tradition and Ottoman customs. Through their journals, newspapers, plays, and writings, the Young Ottomans, Namık Kemal in particular, were among the first to articulate the new theme of Ottoman *patriotism*, asking the Ottomans to love and defend their “fatherland” (*vatan*). They asked the Ottomans to be loyal first and foremost to the fatherland, not to the Sultan, to the Porte or the Islamic community.¹⁷

Ottomanism required that all religious and ethnic groups in the Empire were first and foremost Ottomans, irrespective of their distinct identities. The first Ottoman Constitution of 1876 (and the first Ottoman parliament of 1877) also affirmed these reforms, recognizing the equality of all Ottoman subjects under the law.¹⁸ After a thirty-year of absolutist rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909)¹⁹, who closed down the second Ottoman Parliament of 1878 and suspended the Constitution, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 brought the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*)²⁰ to power, with the aim of keeping the Empire united and of restoring

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of the Young Ottomans see Mardin (1962); Davison (1963: 172-233) and Lewis (1968: 136-159, 169-174).

¹⁸ The Constitution put a strong emphasis on the equality of all Ottoman subjects before the law, having the same rights and duties. But there was a provision which stated that to be admitted to public office all Ottoman citizens had to know Turkish (Davison 1963: 388). Also, under the Constitution, the Sultan retained his powers. He was still the sovereign ruler and Islam was the state religion (Davison 1963: 387). As Berkes (1964: 247) points out, “[n]ot only did the Constitution not represent progress in the Tanzimat’s secularism, it became the legal document for the rejection of the idea of a secular state and the legal affirmation of the Islamic aspect of the Turkish state”. For details on the Constitution of 1876 see Davison (1963: 358-408), Berkes (1964: 223-250) (chapter 8).

¹⁹ During Abdülhamid II’s despotic reign, modernizing administrative, educational, and legal reforms continued with no interruption. See Lewis (1968: 178-194).

²⁰ The CUP was founded in 1889 as a secret society by military cadets, who were later joined by bureaucrats, intellectuals, and the emerging Turkish middle-class. The Young

the constitutional order. The CUP reestablished constitutional regime in the Empire in 1908, deposed the Sultan in 1909, and reinstigated the reforms.

Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism (Türkçülük)

The three political currents – Ottomanism, Islamism and Turkism – which were circulating in the late Ottoman era proposed different ways to save the Empire from disintegration. The idea of Ottomanism gained ascendancy after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. In July 1908, all ethnic and religious communities greeted the restoration of the Constitution with great enthusiasm. The CUP advocated Ottomanism, arguing that the European protection of non-Muslim *millet*s and traditional communal privileges created inequality among the populations of the Empire (Ahmad 1982: 405). The Young Turks defended Ottomanism because “only the end of privilege would enable Muslims to compete on equal terms with their rivals” (i.e. the non-Muslim subjects who were protected by European powers). The Ottomanism espoused by the Young Turks, then, was different from the Ottomanism of the *Tanzimat* era. Hanioglu (2002) argues that the Ottomanism, as espoused by the Young Turks after the Revolution, was viewed by non-Turkish peoples, Muslim (like Arabs) or non-Muslim, as a *Turkification* process, as the symbols used to create a supranational Ottoman identity were, in fact, Turkish.²¹

Turks worked against Abdülhamid II’s despotic rule, which silenced critical voices, and his Islamist policies, assuming anti-Islamist and later pro-Turkist stand (Göçek 2002: 35).

²¹ Hanioglu (2002) argues that before 1908 the CUP was committed to Turkism. The Young Turks replaced their Turkism with Ottomanism to be able to carry out the Revolution of 1908. According to Hanioglu, this was a tactical decision on their part, not an abandonment of their Turkist ideology.

Indeed, the heterogeneity of the Empire and growing nationalisms made it difficult for the idea of Ottomanism to contain separatist nationalisms. The idea of Ottomanism also failed to check the two other important political currents circulating in the Empire – Islamism and Turkism. During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (Pan)-Islamism emerged as a reaction to the *Tanzimat* idea of Ottomanism. Islamists were critical of the penetration of secular ideas from Europe into the Empire. They emphasized loyalty to the Islamic tradition. For them, Islam needed to retain its position of influence on politics and society and to form a significant link among the Muslim nations within and outside the borders. Abdülhamid II promoted Islamism and aimed to unite the Arabs, the Shiites and Sunnis in a strong religious Muslim-Ottoman community. Some Ottomanists were critical of both the Pan-Islamists and the Turkists, arguing that their policies would further provoke secessionist nationalist movements and would certainly lead to the dissolution of the Empire. Indeed, Abdülhamid II's "Islamicist policies provoked pressure from European powers and contributed to further intensification of the separatist nationalist movements among Christians" (Parla 1985: 6).

In the early twentieth century Turkish nationalism began to evoke a much greater response among civilian and military bureaucrats and intellectuals than Ottoman patriotism. Turkish immigrant and exiled intellectuals from the Russian Empire, like Yusuf Akçura and Ahmet Ağaoğlu (1869-1939), criticized Ottomanism for limiting the rights of the Ottoman Turks and advocated Pan-Turkism – the political unification of all the Turkish-speaking people in a single state. While Turkism, as a political movement based on the Turkish people rather than on a dynasty, faith or a state, had an impact on the Young Turks, especially after the Ottoman defeats at the Balkan Wars (1912-1913),

the idea of Pan-Turkism or Pan-Turanism²² did not gain much support among the Ottoman Turks. Turkist ideology was supported by the Young Turks after the Balkan wars and efforts were made to transform the multiethnic Muslim community into an ethnic Turkish nation.

The two main proponents of Turkism, Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp, rejected both Ottomanism and Islamism, calling for a return to the pre-Islamic Turkish past.²³ Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) in his famous *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Political Ways) analyzed the major intellectual currents of his time.²⁴ He (1976) criticized Ottomanism for it was based neither on a nation (*millet*) nor a race (*ırk*) nor a religious community (*ümmet*). He also criticized Ottomanism for minimizing the rights of Turks. He criticized Islamism (*İslamcılık*) for aiming to establish a state based on Islam. Islamism, according to Akçura, ignored the multireligious nature of the Ottoman society and ethnic sentiments emerging even among Muslims (1976: 32). Akçura's idea of Turkish nationalism was based on race. For him, only Turkism (*Türkçülük*) could save the Empire.

Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), one of the most important intellectual founders of Turkish nationalism, attempted to create a synthesis of Turkism, Islamism and

²² Pan-Turanism advocated territorial unity of all Turks. *Turan* referred to the lands inhabited by Turks (Lewis 1968: 347).

²³ Turkist intellectuals established organizations and published periodicals which served as a forum to debate the issues of cultural and political Turkism, to publicize the Turkist views and raise national consciousness of the Turks. Some of the influential nationalist organizations and journals of the period were *Türk Derneği* (the Turkish Association), founded in İstanbul in 1908; the association and its journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland), which advanced a political form of Turkism; *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth), founded in 1912, aimed to raise the social, economic and intellectual level of Turks through education. For these associations see Arai 1992 (chapters 2, 4, 5); for more on Turkism see Lewis (1968: 343-352). The Turkish Hearths, which were re-established in the 1950s, are still active as a conservative nationalist organization.

²⁴ It was first published in a Turkish newspaper in Egypt and then reprinted in İstanbul in 1912.

Modernism, claiming that “[w]e are of the Turkish nation (*millet*), of the Islamic religious community (*ümmet*), of Western civilization (*medeniyet*)” (cited in Parla 1985: 25).²⁵ As Parla observes (1985: 22), he could “handle the dichotomies of tradition-modernity, continuity-change, nationalism-internationalism, and Islamism-secularism much better than his contemporaries ... in his synthesis, his emphasis on the second terms of these dichotomies.” In an article titled “Three Currents of Thought” (“*Üç Cereyan*”), Gökalp argued that the ideals of Turkism, Islamism, and Modernism were not incompatible as each ideal was “an aspect of the same need taken from a different angle” (1959:76).²⁶ The idea of modernism, according to Gökalp,

necessitates only the acceptance of the theoretical and practical sciences and techniques from Europe. There are certain moral needs which will be sought in religion and nationality, as there were in Europe, but these cannot be imported from the West as if they were machines and techniques (1959: 76).

For Gökalp (1959: 75), “modernization [being contemporary with modern civilization] means to make and use the battleships, cars, and aeroplanes that the

²⁵ Here I mainly rely on Gökalp’s *The Principles of Turkism (Türkçülüğün Esasları)*, originally published in 1923 and translated by Robert Devereux in 1968, which includes some of Gökalp’s revised and edited articles which first published in his *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* in 1918. In *The Principles of Turkism*, Gökalp elaborates on the principles of Turkism. I also rely on a collection of selected essays of Ziya Gökalp, which were edited and translated by Niyazi Berkes in 1959, titled *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*.

²⁶ It is important to note that before Gökalp, Young Ottomans, like Namık Kemal, tried to show that Islamic tradition and law, Ottoman traditions and Western civilization were compatible, and that it was possible to reach reconciliation among these three elements. While for Gökalp Islam only provided the ethical-normative basis of society, for Namık Kemal, Islam provided not only the ethical but also the *legal* bases of society. For Kemal, the Ottoman political tradition of state, religious and ethnic tolerance would provide the political framework, while European civilization would provide the scientific and modern techniques necessary to achieve economic prosperity and power (see Berkes’s introduction in Gökalp 1959: 18-19).

Europeans are making and using. But this does not mean being like them only in form and in living". The idea of modernity, then, requires the adoption of scientific methods and technological and industrial achievements of European civilization, not the adoption of its moral values. For Gökalp, Islam was an ethical-normative system, which provided the foundation of ethic norms and, hence, the national culture (see Parla 1985: 39-40). It did not provide the legal and political bases of society. He supported the acceptance of Islam as a religious belief, as a faith, without its legal and political rules and thus adopted a *secular* view of religion. He, and later the Kemalist elite, viewed religion as a matter of individual choice.

As opposed to Akçura's Pan-Turkism and race-based nationalism, Gökalp advocated a nonexpansionist Turkish nationalism, based on *culture* and *language*, not on race or ethnicity (Parla 1985: 10). In *The Principles of Turkism*, Gökalp criticized "racist Turkists" for equating the nation with race; "ethnic Turkists" for identifying nation with ethnic group, descending from a common ancestor. He rejected the arguments for ethnic purity, arguing that "social solidarity rests on cultural unity, which is transmitted by means of education and therefore has no relationship with consanguinity" (1968: 13). He also criticized "geographic Turkists" for putting emphasis on territory, as "[n]ot only are there sometimes several nations within a given geographic area, but sometimes a single nation is distributed over several areas" (1968: 14). Ottomanists were wrong to view the nation as inclusive of all subjects of the Empire. This was wrong as "within that amalgam were several nations possessing independent cultures" (*ibid*). Pan-Islamists were wrong to define the nation as a religious community of Muslims (*ümme*). Nation is different as it is "a group with a common language and culture only" (*ibid*). Individuals absorb all the

sentiment and feelings of that nation through education and because of this it is not possible to change nationality (1968: 15).

Gökalp, then, viewed the nation as a linguistic-cultural community. His understanding of nation placed an emphasis on shared culture, language and education. For Gökalp, nation is not a racial, ethnic, geographical, political, or voluntary group. It is a social group “composed of individuals who share a common language, religion, morality and aesthetic, that is to say, who have received the same education” (Gökalp 1968: 15).²⁷ Therefore, for Gökalp, national culture, (Western) civilization (*medeniyet*) and religion were the three foundations that the Turkish national identity derived from.

Gökalp’s view of the nation as a linguistic-cultural community was adopted by the Kemalist elite. Yet, the Kemalists did not view religion as one of the foundations of Turkish national identity.²⁸ Indeed, the Kemalist elite adopted Turkish nationalism and radical secularism as the two of the six main pillars²⁹ of the new Turkish Republic, eliminating Islam from the state institutions and the public sphere. The Kemalists based the new state on a new political community, the Turkish nation, which was one with the state, and thus totally loyal to it.

²⁷ Gökalp defined the nation in another article titled “Millet Nedir?” (What is a Nation?), translation of which is provided by Berkes in *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization* (1959: 134-138). It is important to note that in the 1931 program of the Republican People’s Party (established by Atatürk), a nation is defined in a similar way, but *religion* is not included as one of the elements that a nation share: “The nation is a political and social body composed of citizens who are bound together by unity of language, culture and ideal” (cited in Heyd 1950: 63).

²⁸ Gökalp’s ideas of nationalism and modernism are closely related to the differentiation he makes between “culture” (*hars*) and “civilization” (*medeniyet*). As his views on culture and civilization also relates to his discussions of “the woman question”, they will be discussed later in the chapter.

²⁹ Republicanism, Populism, Etatism and Reformism are the other four Kemalist principles that formed the foundation of the Republic.

These intellectual debates and political currents, especially Turkism, shaped the Kemalist elite's understanding of modernity and nationalism. The next section focuses on the reforms concerning women in the late Ottoman period and the ways in which "the woman question" was raised and debated by both male and female Ottoman intelligentsia. This section provides the pre-Republican historical and intellectual context against which the Kemalist reforms and gender discourse could be better understood.

2. "The Woman Question" in the Late Ottoman Period

The pre-*Tanzimat* Ottoman society was segregated on the basis not only of *millet* differentiation, but also of *gender* (Tekeli 1986: 181). Until the *Tanzimat* reforms there was no unified legal code in the Empire. The legal and social status of women was defined by the Islamic law, according to which women were not equal to men: before a court of law, two female witnesses were considered to be equal to one male witness. Although women had the right to use their property as they deemed fit, it was usually their husbands who made their decisions. As far as inheritance rights were concerned, daughters could inherit only the half of what sons inherited. Family law permitted polygamy (up to four wives). There was no age limit to marriage and no civil marriage. Family law also granted the right of divorce only to men, in which case men automatically had the custody of their children. Whether in rural or urban areas, women's primary responsibility was housework and child-rearing. The state often issued decrees to regulate the behaviour of women in the public space and the style of clothing they could wear. As Tekeli (1986: 182) argued, "women were subject to the absolute authority of men through the mediation of the institutions of state, religion and family".

The *Tanzimat* reforms and the process of modernization/Westernization throughout the nineteenth century led to profound changes affecting women's status. The most significant reforms were in the field of education. In 1842, girls were granted the right to be trained as mid-wives at the Medical school (Kandiyoti 1991b: 28). In 1858, the first high schools for girls (*kız rüşdiyeleri*) were established followed by the first girl's vocational training school in İstanbul (*Kız Sanayi Okulu*) (1869) and the first Teacher Training School for Girls (*Darülmüallimat*) (1870) (Caporal 1982: 102, 105). Under Abdülhamid II, the first *idadi* school for girls (a special category between the *rüşdiye* and university education) was opened in March 1880 in İstanbul (Caporal 1982: 107). After the Young Turk Revolution, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) aimed to restructure the education system. The CUP program which was accepted in their Fourth Party Congress in 1911, aimed to improve and increase the number of existing girls' schools (Caporal 1982: 108). At the end of the World War I, there were four high schools for girls in İstanbul (Caporal 1982: 112; Taşkiran 1976: 40). In 1914, the first university courses were offered to girls and a department for girls (*İnâs Dâr-ül-fünun*) was opened (Caporal 1982: 113). For the most part, it was elite Ottoman women who benefited from these reforms.

The 1858 land code gave equal inheritance rights to girls and boys (Tekeli 1986: 182). In 1917 a new family law (*Hukuk-u Aile Kararnamesi*) was introduced, which had different provisions for Muslims and non-Muslims (Berkes 1964: 417). The new law gave the state the right to intervene in family matters, such as marriage and divorce – matters which previously were under the jurisdiction of religious authorities. It also banned the marriage of boys under eighteen and girls under seventeen (Caporal 1982:

121). Women were granted the right to divorce their husbands, if the latter wanted to take a second wife without their consent (Berkes 1964: 418). The law also made it difficult for men to divorce their wives through repudiation (Caporal 1982: 122). It did not abolish polygamy, but it did impose some restrictions. Thus, women were allowed to “stipulate in the marriage contract that the husband could not enter into polygamous marriage ... if the terms of such marriage contract were broken, either the first or the second marriage would be dissolved automatically upon the first wife’s petition” (Berkes 1964: 418). Some articles of the code (concerning dowry and alimony) were nullified, as requested by the Christian *millet*s, after İstanbul was occupied by the Allies in 1919. The law, abrogated in 1926, paved the way for a secular civil code, introduced by the Kemalist elite after the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

Following the Young Turk Revolution, women began to participate in public life through charitable, occupational, and later patriotic organizations. Women demanded, and were encouraged, to participate in the labour force to replace the male labour lost during the Balkan Wars and World War I (Demirdirek 1998). They were employed in such sectors like food and textile. During the Balkan Wars, middle-class women tended to the wounded through the women’s branch of the Red Crescent Society. As Kandiyoti (1991b: 30) observes, “the growth of female employment did not remain confined to white-collar jobs in post offices, banks, municipal services and hospitals but involved attempts at wider mobilization throughout the Anatolian provinces”. In the agrarian sector, the Fourth Army formed Women Workers’ Brigades (*Kadın Amele Taburları*); these women were sent to Adana to work as agricultural workers in the cotton harvest (Durakbaşa 1987: 47).

These legal, educational and institutional reforms provided the context in which educated, elite Ottoman women began to publish their journals and establish first women's associations, especially following the Young Turk Revolution.

“The Woman Question” and the Ottoman Women’s Movement (Hareket-i Nisvan)

The first wave of debates on women’s issues and the family dates back to the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, when male intellectuals began to criticize the low status accorded to women in society (see Caporal 1982: 54-63). During the *Tanzimat* era (1839-1876), the emerging new intelligentsia advocated women’s equality with men, criticizing the segregation of the sexes. Young Ottomans³⁰ and the leaders of the new literary movement were critical of the restrictions imposed on women. They wrote extensively on women’s education and the lower status of women in the family, pointing to practices such as polygamy and arranged marriages. İbrahim Şinasi wrote the first Turkish play, a satire titled *Şair Evlenmesi* (A Poet’s Marriage), commenting on the status of women and the practice of arranged marriages. According to Kandiyoti, male reformers and writers of the period

no longer wanted arranged marriages, controlled and manoeuvred by their older female relatives; they desired romantic involvements and love, educated wives with whom they could have intellectual communication, a social life where the sexes could mingle freely without fear of scandal or gossip – in short, freedom from the oppressive conventions of traditional Ottoman life (1995: 310).

³⁰ For a detailed discussion of the views of the Young Ottomans see Mardin (1962) and Lewis (1968: 150-159).

The male intelligentsia also took up the issue of women's economic position, arguing that because women were not allowed to work, they were totally dependent on their fathers, husbands, or children (Caporal 1982: 61). The dress code was also discussed during this period (Şeni 1995). Indeed, as it will be discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 6, veiling became a symbol for, or opposition to, Westernization.

Through their journals, newspapers, novels and plays the Young Ottomans, Namık Kemal in particular, were among the first to articulate the idea of a new "womanhood". In 1862, Namık Kemal published an article on women's education in *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, titled "Terbiye-i Nisvan Hakkında Bir Layiha" (A Pamphlet on Women's Education) (Caporal 1982: 54; see also Çakır 1994: 35). He viewed women's lack of education as the main cause of women's low status in society. It was also the main reason for the decline of family and the nation (Caporal 1982: 59). Namık Kemal called for reforms in the education system, allowing women to attend schools and get a modern education (*ibid.*). In an article titled "Aile" (Family) in *İbret*, another important newspaper of the *Tanzimat* period, he criticized women's subordinate position in the Ottoman family (Caporal 1982: 55, Çakır 1994: 35). In the newspaper *Terakki*, reformist men published numerous articles criticizing traditional marriages and advocating Western-style education for women and women's entry into the social and public life (Caporal 1982: 55).

During the First Constitutional period (1876-78) and under Sultan Abdülhamid II, the novels of writers such as Ahmet Mithat and Hüseyin Rahmi (Gürpınar) raised the issue of women and arranged marriages (Caporal 1982: 70-71). They supported women's right to education and emphasized the need to improve the lot of women in society for the

sake of the family and nation, criticizing polygamy and divorce by repudiation of wives (Caporal 1982: 73). According to Şemsettin Sami, who took a reformist Islamist position, women's education was the necessary prerequisite for the happiness of Ottoman society (Caporal 1982: 71; Durakbaşa 1987: 58). Like many other writers, Şemsettin Sami defended women's rights within the framework of Islam (Durakbaşa 1987: 52). For reformist Islamist men, Islam should not be blamed as it was the misinterpretation of Islam which was the cause of women's low status in society. The views of the reformist male intellectuals were met with criticism and opposition from the *ulema* (the religious men of learning) and conservatives.

During the Second Constitutional period, the debates on "the woman question" were integrated into the three competing political currents, Westernism, Islamism and Turkism. Selahattin Asım, Abdullah Cevdet and Celal Nuri (İleri), were among the Westernists (Caporal 1982: 84-91; Durakbaşa 1987: 61-63). For some of the latter, Islam was the reason for the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the Empire should adopt secular Western values and norms as well as Western techniques (Berkes 1964: 338-340, 352). For Abdullah Cevdet, "there are not two civilizations, there is only one to which to turn, and that is Western civilization, which we must take into our hands whether it be rosy or thorny" (cited in Berkes 1964: 358). He defended women's right to education and criticized polygamy and arranged marriages (Caporal 1982: 89). For Selahattin Asım, who adopted a radical Westernist position, women's low position in society was due to women's covering (*tesettür*), polygamy, divorce by repudiation, slavery, religious and cultural laws and norms, which must all be rejected (Caporal 1982: 88-89; Durakbaşa 1987: 61-62). For other Westernists, like Celal Nuri, religion was

being misinterpreted by the *ulema*. The key then was to reform Islam, not abandon it. While technical aspects of European civilization must be adopted, Turkish-Islamic culture must be preserved and transformed when needed (Caporal 1982: 88). In his book *Kadınlarımız (Our Women)* Celal Nuri defended women's rights, arguing that reforms like a ban on polygamy were in accord with Islam, which had simply been misinterpreted (Durakbaşa 1987: 62-63; Kandiyoti 1991b: 33).

Other reformist Islamists also blamed the declining status of women in the Empire on the misinterpretation of Islam, but they formulated their ideas in a framework of "true Islam" (Durakbaşa 1987: 52-58). They were supportive of women's education, but only because it would be a positive step for the well-being of the moral community. Educated women would raise children "with high morality and a strong character" who would be efficient members of the Muslim community (*ibid.* 1987: 57; also Caporal 1982: 82-83). For conservative Islamists, however, the decline of the Ottoman Empire was the result of Western influence and interference and the solution was to comply with the rules of the *Şeriat* (Berkes 1964: 340-343; Caporal 1982: 81-84). For conservative Islamists, like Mustafa Sabri and Musa Kazım, the family must be protected from the negative influence of the West. They defended polygamy and divorce by repudiation, arguing that they were in accord with the interests of the family and women (Kandiyoti 1991b: 32).

According to Turkists like Ziya Gökalp, Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul) and Halide Edip (Adıvar), the decline of the Empire resulted from the conservative Muslims who were against change and who rejected to transform religion according to changing conditions (Berkes 1964: 351; Caporal 1982: 91-101). According to Turkists, Islam weakened the Turkish national culture (*milli kültür*). Gökalp argued that Turkish national

customs and values degenerated under the influence of Arabic, Persian and Byzantine civilizations (Gökalp 1959). Gökalp's views of national family and women, which shaped the Kemalist gender discourse, will be discussed below.

Men were not the only ones to speak out on the woman question. Elite Ottoman women actively participated in and contributed to these debates. During the late *Tanzimat* period, they sent unsigned letters to the newspaper *Terakki* (1868), in which they questioned the practice of polygamy and voiced the problems women confronted in public transportation (Çakır 1994: 23). Later, some newspapers began to publish weekly magazines devoted to women's issues. In the *Muhadderat İçin Gazetedir*, the women's weekly issue of *Terakki*, women demanded the establishment of education institutions for girls and argued for gender equality and monogamy (Caporal 1982: 55). Women also started to publish their own journals in the late *Tanzimat* period.

During the First Constitutional period (1876-78) and under Sultan Abdülhamid II, women's journals proliferated (Çakır 1994: 23-32; Demirdirek 1998). One of the most important women's journals was *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (The Newspaper Exclusively for Women)* (1895-1908), which published articles by well-known women like Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye, as well as letters by women readers (Caporal 1982: 66-67). With the Young Turk revolution, which provided a relatively free environment following Abdülhamid II's repressive reign, new women's journals appeared. In fact, more than forty women's journals had been established between 1876 and 1922 (Çakır 1994). Among the women's journals of the Second Constitutional period (1909-1922), *Kadın* (Woman), *Mehasin*, *Demet*, and *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World) (1913) were the most influential. Through these journals women publicized their demands and

disseminated news of the activisms of Western feminists (Caporal 1982: 56; Çakır 1994: 31). During this period, women's associations and groups also flourished, such as *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (the Society for the Development of Women), founded by Halide Edip in 1908, and *Müdafaa-i Hukuk-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (the Society for the Defence of Women's Rights). While some of these were charitable associations, others were branches of political parties. Some associations were explicitly created to raise feminist issues (for details see Çakır 1994: 43-78; Tekeli 1990: 269; Caporal 1982: 149-150).

The most important characteristic of the Ottoman women's movement was the debates and discussions around the concept of "womanhood" (*kadınlık*) (Zihniöğlü 1998: 26).³¹ Ottoman women defined *women* as a group that shared similar problems and social status. They adopted a discourse of "we as women" to redefine the "ideals of womanhood" (Zihniöğlü 1998: 27).³² These "ideals of womanhood" represented the ideals of educated elite Ottoman women. Nevertheless, these women tried to talk about the problems *all* (mostly Muslim) women were facing and to come up with solutions to change the plight of *all* Ottoman women. They demanded full equality between men and women. They discussed the existing inequalities in the family and customs that restricted women to home, demanding to participate in civil life. They demanded the right of divorce for women, a ban on polygamy (which was allowed under the Ottoman family law) and arranged marriages, the right to education and work, and the reform of the education system. Fatma Aliye (1864-1924), one of the most prominent figures in the

³¹ Some feminist scholars and activists in the post-1980 Turkey have regarded this movement as the first wave of feminism in Turkish society.

³² For Ottoman (and later Turkish) women's discourses, periodicals and associations in the late Ottoman period see Toprak (1988b, 1998); Sirman (1989); Kandiyoti (1991b); Çakır (1994); Zihniöğlü (1999b).

Ottoman women's movement, criticized conservatives like Mahmut Esat Efendi, who defended polygamy (Berkes 1964: 285-287; Caporal 1982: 73-74). According to Fatma Aliye:

If we believe that Islam has universally valid principles, we ought to declare that the monogamous marriage is the one enjoined by Islam and that the verse of the Kur'an enjoining men to remain with one wife is in accordance with civilization. It is only then that we can justify our position (cited in Berkes 1964: 287).

Although Ottoman women's movement demanded equal status in the family and claimed the right to education and to work, it did not challenge the traditional roles of women as mothers and wives (Sirman 1989: 9). Some women aimed to help women "to be a good mother, a good wife and a good Muslim" (Caporal 1982: 67; Taşkıran 1976: 35). Other women formulated their demands within a nationalist framework, emphasizing the need to help men in the progress of the Turkish nation by bringing up their children with nationalist ideals. As far as the dress code was concerned, these elite women kept their demands modest to avoid a strong reaction from the conservative segments in society. On the pages of the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World), some women argued that women did not have to wear the veil and *charshaf* (a black garment that covers the body from head to toe) to be good Muslims (Demirdirek 1998). Aynur Demirdirek's (1998: 72) analysis of the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası* reveals that:

In later issues, a more secular tone gains strength in their advocacy. Women, who had been trying to advocate their demands carefully by monitoring the mood of the country, presented their demands for change in attire in a nonreligious framework and justified it as "*zamanın icabı*" (a necessity of times) and as a way for Ottoman women to take their place within the "*medeni dünya*" (civilized world). Articles reveal that *Kadınlar Dünyası*, as well as the Association of *Müdafaa-i Hukûk-i Nisvân*

Cemiyeti, rather than debating the philosophy of concealing, addressed the issue by emphasizing how Ottoman women's dress was perceived by outsiders, by the "*medenî dünya*", and tried to convince the public in favour of change.

During the War of Independence (1919-1922), Halide Edip (Adivar) insisted that women should wear *charshaf*, which, she argued, symbolized the nationalist and religious spirit of the people. It also symbolized "the representation of elite women with the populace and integration of the woman populace into the National Struggle" (Durakbaşa 1987: 74).

In sum, the first wave of debates on women's issues dates back to the mid-nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries when the male reformist intelligentsia criticized the subordinate position of women in the family, advocating the emancipation of women. Adopting a discourse of "we as women", Ottoman female intelligentsia also began to speak for all Ottoman women. Women who were leaders of the Ottoman women's movement, however, were privileged women – mostly wives and daughters of the ruling class. An elite minority, they were well-educated, intellectual women, who could speak several languages. Most of them had been tutored by foreign governesses. While they began to speak for women, they did not represent the interests and demands of *all* Ottoman women.³³ Nevertheless, these elite women contributed to the discussions

³³ It is important to note that the Ottoman women's movement was not monolithic. Armenian women established charitable and cultural organizations and also published their own women's journals, such as Hayganuş Mark's *Hay Gin (Armenian women)*. Armenian women like Hayganuş Mark and Zabel Asadur advocated women's equality with men. An analysis of Armenian women's discourses and activism in the late Ottoman Empire has to date not been conducted – an omission which deserves to be remedied. In 1919 Kurdish women also established a Kurdish women's organization (the Society for the Advancement of Kurdish women – *Kürt Kadımları Teali-i Cemiyeti*) in İstanbul. Çakır's study (1994) mentions women of different ethnic backgrounds (like Armenian women) active in the Ottoman women's movement only in passing. She does not mention Kurdish women's organization in İstanbul.

on the changing nature of the Ottoman polity, bringing women's issues and demands into public attention through their writings in the daily press and women's periodicals.

Ziya Gökalp: Culture, Civilization, National Family and Women

[W]e have to be the disciples of Europe in civilization, but entirely independent of it in culture. ... [W]e Turks can recognize the Europeans as superior in civilization. In civilization we can be their disciples and their imitators. But, beware, we should never view the culture of other nations as superior to our own! We should by no means be the disciples or imitators of other nations in matters of culture." (Gökalp 1959: 250-251)

Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), whose ideas with regard to culture and civilization, modernity, secularism, nationalism, family, and women shaped the Kemalist reforms, was the main theoretician of Turkish nationalism. In his writings, Gökalp dealt with every field of life – politics, administration, legal and education systems. In *The Principles of Turkism* he proposed an action program to deal with the economic, political, religious, legal and cultural problems facing Turkey. His ideas provided the basis for Kemalism.

Gökalp advocated a nonexpansionist Turkish nationalism, based on shared culture and language, rather than on race or ethnicity (Parla 1985: 10).³⁴ He also distinguished between "culture" (*hars*) and "civilization" (*medeniyet*). Civilization is "the sum total of social institutions shared in common by several nations that have attained the same level of development" whereas culture was "composed of the integrated system of religious,

³⁴ Please note that this is not an exhaustive study of Gökalp's views but only of those aspects related to "the woman question" and nationalism. For a systematic and comprehensive analysis of Gökalp's thought, see Parla (1985). Also see Heyd (1950), and introduction to *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization* by Berkes. Many of Gökalp's ideas have been used selectively by Kemalists, ultra-nationalists and leftists.

moral, legal, intellectual, aesthetic, linguistic, economic, and technological spheres of life of a certain nation” (Gökalp 1959: 104). While culture is national, civilization is international. As civilization is *international*, civilizational values can be borrowed by any nation without endangering the authenticity and distinctiveness of national culture. Thus, for Gökalp, borrowing from Western civilization was acceptable as long as the Turkish national culture was not threatened. Only the material aspects of Western civilization, i.e. scientific and technological achievements, should be adopted because those nations that fail to preserve their cultural distinctiveness are destined to decline.

Gökalp’s distinction between “culture” and “civilization” is similar to the division anti-colonial nationalisms employ between the material and the spiritual domains (Chatterjee 1991: 522). As discussed in Chapter 2, by employing “material/spiritual” distinction, anti-colonial nationalisms cast women as the bearers of national and cultural authenticity. The “spiritual” is the domain where anti-colonial nationalisms locate their authentic national identity/difference. Yet, ironically, the “spiritual” is, in fact, the domain where nationalist projects construct/imagine a national culture by “inventing” traditions, histories, myths and symbols.

Indeed, in order to show that Turkish national *culture* was compatible with European *civilization*, Gökalp went back to the roots of Turks to discover and/or invent the foundations of the Turkish family, rooted in the pre-Islamic Turkish past, with its Central Asian roots. Gökalp argued that the ancient Turks had a glorious past during which women enjoyed equal legal status with men. Turkish culture was different from the Ottoman culture and it was compatible with European civilization. Gökalp argued that those institutions or customs which were attributed to the Turks, such as polygamy and

the seclusion of women, were, in fact, not Turkish. Rather, they were part of the Near Eastern civilizations which came to be imposed on the Turkish national culture.

In *The Principles of Turkism* Gökalp (1968) emphasized the national-cultural rather than the Islamic religious sources of social morality. *National-patriotic morality* – love for one’s fatherland, nation and national culture – includes such central values as commitment to self-government, equality, and peace; to *democracy*, *human rights* and *feminism*, and solidarity (Gökalp 1968: 61). *Family morality*, based on old Turkish cultural values, included such norms as *democracy* in the “parental family” (as opposed to the autocracy of the “patriarchal family”), equality of men and women and monogamy. Thus, for Gökalp (1968), “ancient Turks were both democrats and feminists. As expected, those societies that are democrats are usually feminists.” Gökalp put a strong emphasis on the nuclear national family (1968: 62) – which he defined as the cell of the social organism³⁵ (i.e. the Turkish nation) – and on women’s education.³⁶ For Gökalp too women represented the past, the authenticity of the Turkish national culture. As women were relegated to the domestic sphere, they were able to keep the authenticity of Turkish culture, which they would transmit to their children. In sum, Gökalp’s female image was

modeled after the ‘ideal Turkish woman’ of ancient Turks, a politically active woman who participated in war, in political committees, as courageously as men; a socially responsible woman who took care of

³⁵ According to Gökalp (1968), there were three kinds of social groups (*zümre*): family groups, occupational groups and political groups. Most important are the political groups, for these are independent and self-sufficient collectivities. For him, “political groups are social organisms, family groups being the cells and occupational groups being the organs of this organism”.

³⁶ Gökalp’s letters written from Malta (1956), where he was in exile, to his wife and daughters further illustrate his views on family and education of women. In his letters, he placed a strong emphasis on his daughters’ education (1956: 20).

social welfare and house-keeping activities instead of leisure and luxury (Durakbaşa 1987: 71-72).

Going back to the roots to rediscover and/or invent the “authentic” national culture allowed Gökalp, and later Kemalists, to argue that they were not imitating the West by recognizing women’s equality with men. Thus, to modernize, “to catch up with the West”, the Turks had to distance themselves from the Ottoman/Islamic past, going back to the roots of Turkish culture in Central Asia. The Kemalist elite went much further than Gökalp by eliminating Islam from his “tripartite synthesis of Turkism-Islamism-Modernism” (Parla 1985: 121).

Gökalp’s views on civilization and culture, nationalism, secularism, modernization and the woman question had a great deal of influence on the Kemalist elite. Indeed, Kemal Atatürk put some of his ideas into practice in the early days of the Republic. Gökalp’s program for improving women’s status in society was also implemented by the government of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Turkist ideology found support among the Young Turks³⁷ who sought to create a Muslim-Turkish middle class and a “new family” (Durakbaşa 1987: 49). Gökalp advised the CUP government on the unification of secular and religious education, the reform of pious foundations (*vakıflar*), and the abolition of the office of Şeyhülislam (the highest authority on religious matters) and the family code of 1917 (Parla 1985: 14; Caporal 1982: 100). Some of these policies, which initiated by the CUP government, were later more aggressively pursued by the Kemalist elite.

³⁷ See footnotes # 20 and 21.

3. *The Kemalist Project of Modernity and Women*

We cut the connections with our old culture [*hars*] and suddenly found ourselves like a man on a crowded street, suffering from amnesia. (Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar 2001: 54-55; translation mine).

We're the children of a crisis of mind and identity; we're living the question "To be or not to be" more poignantly than Hamlet. As we embrace this dilemma, we will more fully take control of our lives and our work. (Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar "İstanbul" from *Five Cities (Beş Şehir)*; translated and cited by Göknaar 2003: 647).³⁸

The Turkish Republic was established on the ruins of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Ottoman Empire in 1923. Following the War of Independence³⁹ (1919-1922), the Kemalist elite embarked on a "civilizing" project – a project of modernization and nation-building which took Western civilization as its reference point. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his friends shared the views of the modernist and Turkist elites of the late Ottoman Empire, insisting that "to reach the level of contemporary civilization", the new Republic should adopt not only Western technology and institutions but also the Western secularist, positivist and rationalist outlook. This is not surprising as Mustafa Kemal and his friends were educated and trained in the Westernized military institutions of the Empire, which helped them develop their own vision of modernity.

³⁸ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1963), one of the most prominent literary figures of Turkey, was a novelist, writer, and critic. His novels, articles and critical essays provide insights into the Kemalist revolution in the early years of the Republic.

³⁹ The Ottoman Empire, defeated at the end of the World War I, was disintegrating. Mustafa Kemal and his friends launched the War of Independence in 1919, in which women actively participated. After the war was won, the Ottoman Sultanate was abolished in November 1922 and a new Republic was established in October 29, 1923, with Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) as its first president.

The Early Republican Era (1920-1950)

Kemalist elites did not contest the notion of *universality* of modernity. Moreover, modernization entailed a *top-down* transformation of a “traditional” society to a “modern”, i.e. Western, society.⁴⁰ The Kemalist Revolution was “a ‘revolution from above’, intent not on social-structural transformation but on political and cultural change, itself largely confined to the center” (Sunar and Sayarı 1986: 169). Modernization involved everyday aspects of social life, such as proper dressing and behaviour in the public sphere. The Kemalist elite, then, agreed with Gökalp that “a mere political change meant nothing unless it was followed by a social and cultural revolution” (Berkes 1959: 21). Indeed, as Mardin argues, with the establishment of the Republic, Turks “embarked on a major *identity switch*” which “involved a change in status, from subjects of a multi-ethnic, cosmopolitan empire to citizens of a republic that set down and affirmed its true Turkishness” (2002: 115, emphasis mine).

Indeed, to break with the Ottoman past and Islamic tradition, to secularize both the state and society and to create a new Turkish national identity the Kemalist elite introduced a series of reforms. In March 1924, the Caliphate was abolished and the education system was secularized through the Law on the Unification of Education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat*).⁴¹ In December 1925, all religious brotherhoods and *tarikats* (dervish orders) were banned and their lodges and *türbes* (shrines of holy sheikhs) were closed down. The state began to control religious education by educating *imams* in *imam hatip*

⁴⁰ The *Tanzimat* reforms were also imposed top-down by reformist Ottoman statesmen.

⁴¹ The introduction of this law was a first step in the establishment of a unified, modern, secular and national education system: “Its nation building role was especially vital in a country where identity was often Islamic rather than national, and which was fragmented into numerous regional, tribal, racial, and linguistic units” (Winter 1984: 186).

schools.⁴² In October 1925, the clothing reform outlawed the *fez*, made hats compulsory for men, and allowed women to abandon the veil. While there was no ban on the veil, its use was discouraged by the Kemalists, who viewed it as a symbol of ignorance, backwardness, and resistance to progress and civilization.⁴³ In 1926 a new Civil Code (*Medeni Kanun*), outlawing polygamy, was adopted. In 1928, the constitutional clause which recognized Islam as the religion of the Turkish state was abolished and the Latin alphabet replaced the Arabic alphabet.⁴⁴ As Mardin argues, the adoption of the Latin alphabet aimed to achieve “the double target of cutting modern Turkey’s moorings to Arabic, or in a wider sense Islamic culture, and creating a *national self* that led Kemalist ideologues in the 1930s and 1940s to pursue further Turkification” (2002: 124, emphasis mine).

These reforms sought to remove Islam from the public sphere and, thus, de-Islamicize the new national identity the Kemalists were set out to construct. Islam was seen as an obstacle to progress towards modernization/Westernization. Republican understanding of secularism (*laiklik*) involved state control over religion (through the Directorate of Religious Affairs), rather than complete separation of the state and religion. The Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire strong and centralized state

⁴² İmam Hatip schools are secondary schools that educate and train *imams* and prayer teachers.

⁴³ The *Türban* (headscarf) issue has been on the public agenda since the mid-1980s. It has led to a polarization in Turkish society between secular Kemalists and Islamist conservatives. Islamist women have been protesting the ban on headscarves at universities and public employment since the mid-1980s. This issue is explored in greater depth in Chapter 6.

⁴⁴ This is one of the reasons for the scarcity of research on the Ottoman women’s movement as the Arabic script prevents researchers from having access to the original documents and reading in a language (Ottoman-Turkish) which has been radically transformed through “language purification” policies of the Republic.

institutions (military and bureaucracy) as well as a centralist, elitist and an authoritarian state tradition.⁴⁵ The ruling elite included the Republican People's Party, the military and civil bureaucrats (Sunar and Sayarı 1986: 169). In the Ottoman Empire “the military, the bureaucracy, and the religious leadership ... make up the pillars of sultanic power. After the Republic ... the triarchic structure of the elite remained the same, the ulema being replaced by the party” (*ibid.*).

In the 1920s and 1930s, the emergent Turkish state was simultaneously modernist, secular, and authoritarian. As in the late Ottoman period, the state served as a modernizing/Westernizing/civilizing agent in the Republican era. For the founders of the Republic, the path to progress was the path to Western civilization. Kemalist elites and intellectuals believed in universal rational knowledge which guided their reforms.⁴⁶ Through these reforms they would civilize the people and bring about progress, accomplishing a “civilizational shift”. The Turkish state was thus the agent of nation-building project, imposing uniformity and cultural homogeneity over ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse population, through the standardization of law and the extension of public education.

Inspired and encouraged by Gökalp's writings, the Kemalist elite sought to recover a lost Turkish cultural heritage, Turkish history and language through establishing official societies such as the Turkish Language Institute (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) and the Turkish History Research Society (later became Turkish History Institute – *Türk*

⁴⁵ For more on the state tradition in Turkey see Heper 1985.

⁴⁶ Gökalp criticized the split between the elites and the people, calling for the intellectual elites, who possess only civilization, to take the civilization to the people, while, in return receiving education in Turkish national culture and character from the masses (Gökalp 1959: 249; also see Parla 1985: 70-73).

Tarih Kurumu). The standardization and imposition of Turkish as the sole official language within the Republic was driven by the desire to create a homogenous national community.⁴⁷ Rather than developing *unity* through recognizing and reconciling differences in society the Kemalist elite adopted a policy of *uniformity*. Kemalists reinterpreted history, (re)creating common myths, identifying certain symbols as national, privileging some stories or myths over others. Instead of a glorious Ottoman past, the new “official” history promoted the Central Asian origins of the Turks, their democratic and modernist views, and their achievements.⁴⁸ It referred to the memories of pre-Islamic Turkish golden age. In his speeches Atatürk recalled the ancient glories and liberties of Turks in Central Asia. Thus, the Kemalist “narration of the nation” involved the *remembering* or *(re)inventing* of the pre-Islamic history of Turks, while *forgetting* the Islamic Ottoman past. It also involved the creation of a new secular national identity which defined itself in relation to Muslim identity. As opposed to the progressive, civilizing, modern Kemalism, Islam was characterized as backward, conservative, oppressive and against progress. In other words, the Kemalist project of modernity constructed Islam as its “Other”. This turned Islam into an oppositional movement (Yavuz 2003) which emerged in the 1980s to redefine history, society, and identity in Turkey (see Chapter 6).

⁴⁷ To this end, the Kemalist elite organized the 1928 campaign of *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!* (Citizen, Speak Turkish!). The First Turkish Language Congress was held in 1932 in İstanbul, which emphasized the importance of Turkification of the language and adopted what is known as the “Sun Language Theory” (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*), which claimed that all languages derived from Turkish.

⁴⁸ The “Turkish History Thesis” was introduced at the First Turkish History Congress (*Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi*) in Ankara in 1932 and was incorporated in secondary and high school history textbooks (see Ersanlı 1987). People’s Houses (*Halkevleri*) were established around the country to teach the people new official history.

The Kemalist nation-building project can also be seen as a reaction to the heterogeneous Ottoman *millet system*. The Kemalist elite viewed the nation-state as the most desirable form of political community and adopted universalist assumptions about the homogeneous “national culture” underlying the nation-state. In the process, the languages of different ethnicities, including local/regional dialects, different ethnic traditions and religious beliefs were assigned to the private sphere in order to create a uniform national identity and a homogeneous national community within the “indivisible Republic”. Kemalists sought to transcend existing loyalties and affiliations within the new political framework of the nation-state. Kemalists defined the nation on the basis of common language, culture, history and territory. Religion and ethnicity were discarded as the basis for the new Turkish nation. The heritage provided by language, customs and traditions was constructed as the “essence” of the Turkish nation. In this sense Turkish nationalism is inclusive since anyone who considers these traits as one’s own is accepted as a member of the Turkish nation and granted citizenship rights. Yet, this construction has little tolerance for diversity. The Turkish nation was imagined as an organic body, a unified homogeneous entity, rejecting and/or denying any ethnic, religious and class difference in society (Parla 1995). As argued in Chapter 2, nationalisms are often based on communal discourses and Kemalism has had an anti-liberal, populist and communitarian discourse (*ibid.*). As we shall see in the subsequent chapters, the social movements that emerged since the 1980s have challenged this homogenizing national discourse and practice.

The Kemalist nationalist project, then, has had two different and contradictory dimensions: ethnic and legal-cultural (Parla 1995: 176-211). On the one hand, the

Turkish nation is constructed on the basis of the myth of common ethnic ancestry. On the other hand, the Kemalist elite attempted to construct a nation on the basis of the myths of common culture and of equal citizenship. Emphasis on universal citizenship was viewed as a way for the state to transcend existing particularities in society and, thus, integrate the population. The differences among citizens based on gender, ethnicity and class are deemed irrelevant to the exercise of citizenship.⁴⁹ Yet, while Turkish citizenship claims to be inclusionary and universal, it has, in fact, worked in an exclusionary and particularistic manner. It is particularistic because the Republican elites envisioned their citizens as members of the Turkish nation. The ethnic dimension of the Kemalist nationalist project attempted to formulate a national identity based on Turkish origin. This myth of common (Turkish) origin (or even the insistence on shared blood in the late 1930s) has the tendency to construct an exclusionary understanding of the nation.⁵⁰ The creation of citizenship within the boundaries of the modern Turkish nation-state, then, involved both the subordination of particularistic identities and recognition of a

⁴⁹ The Republican elites also adopted a form of “group-differentiated citizenship” (Young 1998; Kymlicka 1996). Three non-Muslim religious communities, namely Armenians, Greeks and Jews, are recognised as minority groups by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. As religious minorities, these groups enjoy certain collective rights such as the right to study in their own languages and the right to practice their religion. Yet, despite having rights and duties as official minorities and as members of the Turkish nation, these minorities have been subject to both official and public distrust. For instance, they suffered from the Capital tax of 1942 and anti-Greek riots in İstanbul in 1955 (“the events of September 6-7”, in which a mob destroyed the shops owned by the members of minorities as well as Greek and Armenian churches, schools, cemeteries etc).

⁵⁰ In the 1930s, Turkish nationalism took the form of an ethnic or even race-based nationalism rather than a civic one (Parla 1995: 203-211). Kurdish revolts in the southeast (1925-1938) (see chapter 5) and the rise of fascism in Europe were among the main reasons for such a shift in the early formulations of civic, territory-based nationalism by the Kemalist elite.

particularistic identity (Turkish) as universal.⁵¹ More importantly, the new Turkish citizen was not viewed as an atomistic individual but as part of a homogenous, undifferentiated national collectivity. This organicist understanding of nationalism viewed the needs and interests of the individual citizen as subordinate to the needs and interests of the nation. As we shall see below, it circumscribed the emancipation of women, since women's individuality was repressed by the priorities and interests of the national community.

State Feminism and the Representation of Women in the Kemalist Nationalist Project

“The woman question” re-emerged in the early days of the Republic and was discussed within the nationalist framework by the Kemalist elite and later by the supporters of state feminism like Afet İnan (1962) and Tezer Taşkıran (1976), who pointed to the equality of women and men among ancient Turkic tribes. They argued that Turkish women had high status in pre-Islamic Turkish society. Thus, the elimination of sexual segregation and visibility of women in the public sphere were justified on the grounds that they were compatible with Turkish national culture.

Indeed, the Kemalist elite viewed women's emancipation as part and parcel of their modernization/Westernization and nation-building projects. The status of women was a reflection of society's character – progressive or reactionary. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk frequently emphasized in the speeches he delivered in different towns and cities

⁵¹ The citizenship rights handed down by the Kemalist elite have been openly challenged since the 1980s by Islamists, Kurds and different groups of women, who demanded the recognition of their particularistic identities and expansion of their citizenship rights. For demands and struggles of different groups of women see Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

in the early 1920s that “progress can be accomplished only by both men and women in cooperation and harmony”:

A society – a nation – is formed by two kinds of people, men and women. So if we are to have a truly developed country is it possible that one half of the nation can be developed and the other half neglected? Is it possible that one half of the nation can be uplifted while the other half remains rooted to the ground? Progress can be accomplished only by both men and women in cooperation and harmony. They must walk together towards the new horizons. Only then will the reforms be successful. I am happy to see that we are moving very close to that goal. Nevertheless, we need to be more courageous in our struggle for that goal.

Sometimes, in some places, I see women covering their faces with their head scarves or turning their backs when a man approaches. How would you explain such behavior? Do you really think that the mothers and daughters of a civilized nation would behave so oddly or be so backward? This sort of thing makes us a laughing-stock in the eyes of foreigners and it must be stopped in the very near future.⁵²

Accordingly, the Kemalist reforms aimed to improve the status of women in society. The law for the unification of instruction, for instance, not only secularized the educational system but also recognized equal rights in education for girls and boys. It also made primary education compulsory for both girls and boys. The adoption of the Turkish civil code in 1926, which was based on the Swiss civil code, outlawed polygamy and gave equal rights to women and men regarding divorce, custody of children, and inheritance. It also sanctioned compulsory civil marriage. The clothing reform allowed women to cast off their veils. Turkish women were also “granted”⁵³ the right to vote and to be elected in municipal elections in 1930 and in general elections in 1934. The new labour law, which

⁵² An excerpt from Atatürk’s “Second Public Address in Kastamonu” (30 August 1925), quoted in Taşkıran (1976: 62).

⁵³ Zihnioğlu’s study (1998) reveals that women had in fact struggled for their political rights prior to women’s suffrage in 1934.

was introduced in 1936, guaranteed maternal leave for pregnant women. It also prohibited women from working at certain jobs such as coal mining (Zeytinoğlu 1998). These reforms improved women's status in Turkey, initiating Kemalist "state feminism" (Tekeli 1986: 193).⁵⁴

Introduction of these reforms was not only an integral part of the Kemalist struggle against the political and religious structures of the Ottoman polity (Tekeli 1981; Kandiyoti 1989, 1991b). It was also an attempt to create a new secular political community based on Turkish national identity. The Kemalist reforms aimed to undermine not only the political but also the cultural symbols and values of the earlier regime. As Mardin (1971: 209) points out, the Turkish revolution was "primarily a revolution of values" where "innovations, such as the reforms in the status of women were directed of changing prevailing values". For the Kemalist revolutionaries,

the symbolic system of the society, culture, seems to have had a relatively greater attraction as target than the social structure itself. And within culture, religion seems to have been singled out as the core of the system (Mardin 1971: 209).

To deconstruct the Islamic symbolic system of the previous order and to secularize society, Kemalists targeted the existing gender relations. Indeed, it was through women's bodies that the Republican regime articulated its superiority over the previous order, producing new sets of meanings, cultural values and codes of social conduct. Unveiled women came to symbolize the new modernizing regime. As Nilüfer Göle observed

⁵⁴ Şirin Tekeli (1986) uses the term to refer to the policies of the Turkish state which has sought to improve women's status in society.

(1996: 14) “[u]nlike most national revolutions, which redefine the attributes of an ‘ideal man’, the Kemalist revolution celebrated an ‘ideal woman’”.

During the early years of the Republic, when the Kemalist elite ruled the country through a single party (1923-1950), the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* – CHP), they attempted to construct the new “Turkish woman” as a symbol of the new Western secular Republic and as an embodiment of the cultural essence of the new Turkish nation. Although the new “Turkish woman” was expected to be *modern*, she would also have to display the signs of authentic national tradition. Thus, the Kemalist project of modernity assigned women two important missions: to signify modernity, and to guard and transmit the Turkish national culture. The new “Turkish woman” was needed both as a modern citizen and as a mother and wife with a mission to raise and educate the next generation of patriotic citizens (Durakbaşa 1987). As Atatürk made it clear,

Their [Turkish women’s] duty is to bring up and educate a strong new generation of people who will defend the country with determination and courage and pass on the spirit of our nation to future generations. Women are the pillars of society and the wellspring of the nation, but they can only perform their tasks if they are enlightened. They must be virtuous, dignified, and capable of gaining respect.⁵⁵

As Göle (1997b: 63) argues, while in the West the public sphere emerged as a liberal bourgeois sphere, from which women were initially excluded, in Turkey it was the visibility of modern, unveiled, educated and professionalized women that conditioned the secular public sphere. Indeed, Kemalists asked (and continue to ask) women to be active promoters and supporters of modernity. At the same time, the public sphere of the new

⁵⁵ An excerpt from Atatürk’s “Speech at the İzmir Girls’ Teacher Training School”, quoted in Taşkiran (1976: 62-63).

republic was also constructed as a male domain and, as Kandiyoti's study of the Turkish novel from the Tanzimat to the Republic reveals, women's entry to the male-dominated public life was "legitimated through the projection of an 'asexual' or even slightly masculinized identity" (1995: 315).⁵⁶ Turkish women, then, had to conceal their femininity in order to take part in the public sphere of the new Republic as citizens. Male domination in the public sphere was ensured by male control over female sexuality.

Yet in recognizing women as citizens in the public sphere, the Republic abolished one of the most significant principles of the previous order: the segregation of the sexes. This, in turn, undermined the *mahalle* ethos. According to Mardin, *mahalle* (city quarter), "the smallest operative unit of the community in the Ottoman empire", a public space where people got together for their immediate social relationships, had extensive social or communal control over individuals:

the *mahalle* was ... a compact *gemeinschaft* with its boundaries protected by its own toughs and faithful dogs, and a setting within which much of the normal life of an average Ottoman citizen was shaped. It is here that primary education was undertaken, births were celebrated, marriages were arranged, and the last rites were performed for the dying (Mardin 1981: 214).

Sexual segregation constituted an important aspect of the *mahalle* culture. Thus, for Mardin (1981: 216),

Atatürk's thrust to establish women's rights may be conceptualized as a concentrated effort to smash what to him appeared as the most stifling and dark aspect of the *mahalle* ethos, namely the restrictions it placed on contacts between men and women in the day-to-day routine of life.

⁵⁶ For a detailed analysis see Kandiyoti (1988), Durakbaşa (1998), and Kadioğlu (1998). In a similar vein, Fatmagül Berktay points to the repression of sexuality and individuality of the women active in the Turkish Left (1995: 252-254).

Through secularizing reforms, the Republican elite also aimed to liberate the individual from “the collective constraints of the Muslim community” (Mardin 1981: 213). Yet, the reforms can also be viewed as an attempt to replace one group of communal loyalty (religious) with another (national). Indeed, the Kemalist nationalist discourse both encouraged and constrained women’s agency. This organicist understanding of Turkish nationalism circumscribed women’s emancipation since women’s (as well as men’s) interests were subordinated to the needs and interests of the nation. Women (and men) were allowed to articulate their interests only within the boundaries prescribed by the nationalist discourse (Kandiyoti 1991a; Köksal 1998).

Prior to women’s suffrage, a group of women led by Nezihe Muhiddin (who was active both in the Ottoman woman’s movement and in the early Republican era) pushed the boundaries of the Kemalist nationalist discourse by attempting to establish *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası* (Women’s People’s Party) in 1923 to struggle for their political rights (Zihnioğlu 1998). Yet, the state refused to give permission to the Party (Toprak 1988a). These women established the Turkish Women’s Union in 1924. Yet, in 1935, the Union was disbanded with the argument that since women gained full equality, there was no need for an autonomous women’s organization (Kandiyoti 1991b: 41-42). Since Kemalists placed a strong emphasis on “national unity”, such attempts were considered “divisive”. Indeed, those women who were active in the Ottoman women’s movement, like Nezihe Muhiddin (1889-1958)⁵⁷, and those women who were initially supportive and

⁵⁷ For an excellent analysis of Nezihe Muhiddin’s views and struggles see Zihnioğlu (1998); also see Zihnioğlu (1999a) Baykan and Ötüş-Baskett (1999).

later critical of the Kemalist regime, like Halide Edip Adivar (1884-1964)⁵⁸, were silenced by the Republican elites. One of the reasons for this silencing was to perpetuate the Kemalist discourse that “the state granted Turkish women all their rights”.

Yet, while the Kemalist reforms improved women’s status, there was no real change in the patriarchal domination in social relations. The Kemalist project of modernity introduced women to the public sphere as *citizens* but it did not challenge existing gender relations in the private realm of the family. Indeed, as will be argued in the next chapter, since the 1980s feminist scholars and activists have exposed the contradictions between the Kemalist discourse, which stressed gender equality, and the daily realities of women’s subordination. Some pointed to the strategic nature of the Kemalist reforms (Tekeli 1981; Toprak 1981). For Toprak (1981) the reforms aimed to strengthen the goals of the Republic, rather than bringing about revolutionary transformation of gender roles. For Kandiyoti (1989), women’s emancipation was one of the “symbolic pawns” in the Kemalist struggle to break with the Islamic institutions and laws of the Ottoman polity.

Thus, the female images constructed by the Kemalist elite included emancipated “professional women” in the public sphere, who were educated and practiced their profession without ignoring their duties at home and without questioning the sexist categories such as female chastity, virginity and virtue etc. As Durakbaşa (1987: 85)

⁵⁸ Halide Edip was a novelist, writer, teacher, and one of the prominent figures of the Independence War (as a public speaker and a soldier fighting alongside men). She was a close friend of Mustafa Kemal during the Independence War but after the establishment of the Republic she disagreed with Atatürk and criticized the authoritarian nature of the Kemalist regime. She and her husband went to exile to London. Durakbaşa (2000) provides an excellent analysis of the relationship between Turkish modernization and feminism by focusing on Halide Edip’s life, memoirs and autobiography in order to provide an alternative, feminist reading of the history of Turkish modernization.

argues, the Kemalist female image was basically a combination of conflicting images of educated professional woman at work, a socially active woman as a member of social clubs and associations, a biologically functioning woman in the family as a mother and a wife, and lastly, a feminine woman, dressed in modern gowns, at the parties and balls.

The Feminist Silence (1935-1980)

After women were “given” the right to vote in general elections in 1934, there was a long period of feminist silence lasting from 1935 to 1980.⁵⁹ During this time, the transition to the multi-party era, which started with the election of the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti* – DP) in 1950, marked a transfer of political power from the state bureaucracy to the bourgeoisie. The DP, led by Adnan Menderes, was a party of modernizing businessmen and property owners. The party represented Muslim peasants, small business owners as well as Islamic values (Sunar and Sayarı 1986: 173).⁶⁰ From the early 1950s, the DP began to relax the official attitude towards Islam. Since then the religious

⁵⁹ The period between 1935 and 1950 can be viewed as period of silence for the Kurds and Islamists too. Yet, the victory of the Democrat Party (DP) in 1950 integrated certain Kurdish landowners and tribal chieftains into the political system. Furthermore, Kurdish nationalism emerged in the 1960s (see Chapter 5). The silence of the Islamists lasted until the DP gained the majority in the Parliament in the 1950 elections. They were able to articulate and channel their demands first through the DP and then other pro-Islamist political parties and Islamist groups and organizations (see Chapter 6). The right wing parties in Turkey, starting with the DP, represented conservative religious values and favoured market economy as opposed to the Kemalist Republican People’s Party which supported state intervention in both the economy and culture.

⁶⁰ It has been argued by many students of Turkish politics that while the Kemalist modernization project was achieved at the elite level (“center”), it was not successful at the mass level (“periphery”). While some segments of the population resisted modernization, other segments remained untouched by the modernization efforts of the state elites (Toprak 1981b; Sunar and Sayarı 1986). For the inhabitants of rural areas Islam continued to be a dominant force (Toprak 1981b). With the end of the single-party era, the emergent parties appealed to the religious sentiments of the rural population.

outlook has become embedded in the ideology and program of mainstream right-wing parties in Turkey. Under the DP government (1950-1960), the language of *ezan* (the call to prayer by the *imam*) was changed back to Arabic. The number of *imam hatip* schools increased.

The military coup of May 27, 1960 banned the DP for using Islam to undermine the secular nature of the state. The DP was also blamed for the economic slowdown in the late 1950s. Moreover, the DP government had adopted repressive policies, such as imposing press censorship. After the coup of 1960, a new and more liberal constitution was adopted that included substantial protections for democracy, freedom of expression, freedom to organize in political or non-political associations, greater autonomy for the universities, and human rights (Sunar and Sayarı 1986: 175). The 1961 constitution, subsequently replaced by the 1982 Constitution, was the most liberal one Turkey has ever had. The newly found freedoms made possible an increase in leftist activism especially in the 1970s both among Turks and Kurds.⁶¹ It was during this time that center-right parties started to use Islam as a political ideology to counter what they saw as the threat of communism. Indeed, in 1969, a pro-Islamist party, the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* – MNP), was established.⁶²

From the late 1960s, the struggles between the secular left and the increasingly powerful Islamist and fascist right resulted in urban violence. On March 12, 1971, the

⁶¹ The PKK (*Partia Karkaren Kürdistan* – Kurdistan Workers' Party) was established as a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish party in 1978, advocating the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish state. For details see Chapter 5.

⁶² The National Order Party was succeeded by the National Salvation party (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – MSP) (1972-1981), the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* – RP) (1983-1998), the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi* – FP) (1998-2001). The members of the FP split into two groups establishing different parties in 2001 – Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* – SP) and the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP).

military gave a memorandum to the president, in which it sought government's resignation. Overthrowing the popular guarantees of the 1961 constitution, the military arrested workers and intellectuals under the system of martial law. In July 1971, the Workers' Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi* – TİP) was banned. The politicians returned to take charge of the country in 1973, and a year later the Republican People's Party (CHP) won the elections. After the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 1974, Turkey was unable to borrow money except from private institutions at inflated interest levels. In late 1974, the CHP government led by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit resigned. Until the September 1980 military coup, right-wing political parties got together to form right-wing coalition governments. Unstable political coalitions, tensions between right and left, Turk and Kurd, economic difficulties, led to the military intervention of September 12, 1980.

Until the early 1970s, women's activism and political participation had been minimal: because Kemalism had "given" women their rights, including political rights, there was no need for a women's movement. Indeed, the existing women's organizations, such as the Turkish Mothers' Union, the Turkish Association of Women University Graduates, and the Turkish Women's Union, were professional organizations and their main activities were "organizing ceremonies, which praised Kemalism on the important civic holidays" (Tekeli 1990: 271). During the 1970s, significant numbers of young women were politicized and became involved in leftist movements (Berktaş 1995; Kılıç 1998). During these years, there was also increase in religious mobilization and some women were also actively involved in religious activism (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Women who have mostly benefited from the Kemalist reforms in Turkey have been the urban women with middle- and upper-middle class backgrounds, rather than

rural and urban working-class women.⁶³ Since Kemalism provided middle class urban women with education and career opportunities, they have been the staunch supporters of radical or “authoritarian” (Göle 1996b) secularism of Kemalism.

Conclusion

The “woman question” has been raised and discussed in relation to the projects of modernization and nation-building in the late Ottoman period and in Republican Turkey. The first wave of debates on women’s issues dates back to the late Ottoman period when reformist male intelligentsia advocated the emancipation of women. More importantly, during this period, Ottoman female intelligentsia began to speak for Ottoman women, demanding equal status with men. They also claimed the right to education and to work. While, as an elite minority, they did not represent the interests and demands of *all* Ottoman women, nevertheless, these women contributed to the discussions on the changing nature of the Ottoman polity, bringing women’s issues into public attention by publishing women’s periodicals and writing in the daily press.

This account is important for understanding the importance Kemalists placed on women. Paying attention to historical, political and intellectual context is also crucial in understanding the rise of the social movements in 1980s and the challenges they posed to

⁶³ Although the primary education has been mandatory for girls and boys since 1924, according to the State Institute of Statistics, in 1950 80.6%, in 1960 75.2% and in 1970 58.2% of women were still illiterate (Table 1). In 1970, women constituted 38% of the labour force (Zeytinoğlu 1998: 184). By 1980, this percentage increased to 45.8% (Table 2; see also Table 3). As late as 1995, within the female labour force, 75% of women were employed in agriculture (mostly unpaid family workers) and 8% in manufacturing (Zeytinoğlu 1998: 185). The representation of women at the parliament has never been above 4.6% (Table 4).

Kemalism. Following the War of Independence, the victorious Kemalists embarked on a project of modernization, taking the West as their reference point. The Kemalist modern project transformed the old Ottoman system which was based both on the *Millet system* and the segregation of the sexes. It overthrew the political, religious and gender order of the Ottomans. The Kemalist reforms aimed not only to undermine ideological, legal and political foundations of the earlier regime, but also to eliminate its cultural symbols and values. Thus, the Kemalist elite displaced the past along with its traditional reference points (Islam).

The Kemalist nation-building project, then, entailed forgetting the Ottoman past and uncovering/inventing the distinctive heritage of pre-Islamic Turks in Central Asia. The nationalist elites privileged certain traditions, histories and cultural symbols over the others. Within this context, women occupied a central place in the Kemalist modern project. In non-Western contexts, appropriations of modernity often involve appeals to cultural authenticity (Chatterjee 1991) and women's bodies and sexuality become the sites where communal identity/difference and an alternative project of modernity are articulated (Göle 1996). Indeed, Kemalism cast Turkish women as both symbols of modernity and as an embodiment of the new Turkish nation.

Gender is still central in shaping discourses and projects of secularist Kemalists and Islamists. Within these discourses women have been cast either as embodiments of cultural authenticity or symbols of modernity. The social movements that emerged in Turkey since the 1980s have challenged the terms of the Kemalist project. These movements have generated debates about modernity, Islam, nationalism and women's place in a pre-dominantly Muslim society. Indeed, modernity, covering (*tesettür*) or

headscarves (*türban*), and the rise of Kurdish nationalism are among the most discussed issues of the last two decades. Women's interventions in the post-1980 era, which will be discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, have not only unmasked the gendered nature of Kemalism, but also challenged the identities and missions imposed on women by different collectivist projects.

Table 1: Illiteracy Rate (%)

YEAR	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
1970	58.2	29.7	43.8
1975	49.5	23.8	36.3
1980	45.3	20	32.5
1985	31.8	13.5	22.6
1990	28	11.2	19.5
2000	19.4	6.1	12.7

Source: State Institute of Statistics (*Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü*), www.die.gov.tr/tkba/istatistikler3.htm

Table 2: Labour force participation of women and men (%)

YEAR	FEMALE	MALE
1980	45.8	79.8
1985	43.6	78.3
1990	42.8	78.2
2000	39.6	70.6

Source: State Institute of Statistics (*Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü*), www.die.gov.tr/tkba/istatistikler4.htm

Table 3: Employment Status of Employed Population (%)

Year	Employee	Employer	Self-Employed	Unpaid Family Worker
FEMALE				
1970	10.2	0.2	6.6	82.9
1975	14.1	0.1	4.7	81
1980	13.9	0.1	4.7	81.3
1985	14.3	0.1	4.7	80.9
1990	17.7	0.2	7.3	74.8
2000	24.3	0.9	6.0	68.8
MALE				
1970	38.4	1.0	39.2	21.3
1975	40.4	1.2	34.7	23.7
1980	44.7	1.5	33.9	19.9
1985	45.2	1.4	33.0	20.4
1990	50.1	2.0	30.7	17.3
2000	54.5	3.6	28.2	13.8

Source: State Institute of Statistics (*Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü*), www.die.gov.tr/tkba/istatistikler4.htm

Table 4: Number of parliamentarians by sex

Election Year	Seat Number	Female	Male	Female (%)
1935	395	18	377	4.6
1939	400	15	385	3.8
1943	435	16	419	3.7
1946	455	9	446	2.0
1950	487	3	484	0.6
1954	535	4	531	0.7
1957	610	7	603	1.1
1961	450	3	447	0.7
1965	450	8	442	1.8
1969	450	5	445	1.1
1973	450	6	444	1.3
1977	450	4	446	0.9
1983	400	12	388	3.0
1987	450	6	444	1.3
1991	450	8	442	1.8
1995	550	13	437	2.4
1999	550	22	528	4.0
2002	550	24	526	4.4

Source: State Institute of Statistics, www.die.gov.tr/tkba/istatistikler6.htm

CHAPTER IV: THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN POST-1980 TURKEY

Having discussed the trajectory of the Kemalist project of modernity, its gendered nature and women's discourses in the Ottoman/Turkish polity, and established the ideological and historical context for the views of feminists in the previous chapter, Chapters four through six focus on the discourses and activisms of Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women that emerged in post-1980 Turkey. Together they explore the questions about the form, content and significance of feminist movements, presenting both priorities and goals of movement activists – what they say – and their actual practice – what they do. This chapter focuses on the activism and discourses of Turkish feminist groups that emerged in the mid-1980s. It is argued that the Turkish feminist movement has exposed the gendered nature of the Kemalist modern project and challenged the dominant Kemalist gender discourse. The movement has carved out its place in the Turkish political scene, rejecting the identities and missions assigned to women by different social and political projects. The analysis is based on surveys of newspapers, pamphlets, documents and feminist periodicals *Feminist*, *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs*, and *Pazartesi*, interviews conducted with feminist activists as well as the appropriate secondary sources.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the emergence of the feminist movement, identifying the political opportunities and resources available for the movement to mobilize. It also discusses feminist challenges to Kemalism and the Turkish left and analyzes the feminist campaigns, protests and discourses in the 1980s

and early 1990s. The second section focuses on the institutionalization of the some segments of the feminist movement in the mid-1990s. It discusses the legal achievements of feminist groups, such as the new civil and gender-sensitive penal codes. The last section focuses on the issue of identity/difference within the feminist movement. It argues that Turkish feminists identify identity formation as one of their main goals. Indeed, feminist struggles for empowerment and inclusion have involved processes of constructing new identities. Through their struggles Turkish feminists have created alternative “subaltern counterpublics”, within which they have generated new discourses and (re-)constructed new identities. Yet, the feminist movement has projected an essentialized identity, marginalizing other groups like Kurdish feminists and Islamist women.

1. The Emergence of an Autonomous Turkish Feminist Movement

[I]n the 80s, a new actor has become visible in Turkish politics: Women. We have always been in politics, but this time we have tried to speak for ourselves. With feminism gender has moved beyond the “our women” discourse and has become a political site (Köker and Bora 1994: 51, translation mine).

This world, this country, this city does not belong only to men. This world's, this country's, this city's streets, avenues, nights do not belong only to men. We women deserve things other than houses, kitchens, ovens, wash-basins, washing machines, irons and diapers. Not only our homes but also the streets outside are ours. That's why we are opposing those who make night-walks unsafe for us. We are raising our voice against those men who make us regret going outside by staring, by making sexual remarks, by touching, and also by raping when an opportunity presents itself; we are raising our voice against those institutions that make

them, allow them, and encourage them to behave like this ... Our solidarity is our power.¹

In the mid-1980s, Turkey witnessed the emergence of a feminist movement which brought to public attention issues such as female sexuality, sexist discrimination and domestic violence against women. As argued in Chapter 3, this was not the first time that women's issues were debated in the Ottoman/Turkish polity. The "woman question" was central to the debates on the changing nature of the Ottoman polity and later on the question of Turkish national identity (Kandiyoti 1989, 1991b). Yet, as Nükhet Sirman (1989) argued, until the 1980s, women were visible in the public sphere as actors of either Kemalism or various brands of Marxism. Indeed, until the early 1970s, few women participated in political life. Existing women's organizations were professional organizations and their main activities were organizing ceremonies which praised Kemalism on civic holidays (Tekeli 1990: 271). They did not question the Kemalist gender discourse. During the 1970s, many young women were politicized and joined leftist movements, struggling against class exploitation and domination, while ignoring gender oppression (Berktaş 1995; Kılıç 1998).

It was only in the early 1980s that an autonomous feminist movement (also known as "the women's liberation movement" – *Kadın Kurtuluş Hareketi*) emerged in Turkey. Changes in the political opportunity structure opened up a space for the movement to emerge as feminists seized the opportunities created by the military coup of September 12, 1980. The military regime, in power for three years, had crushed the left, declaring all political parties illegal and closing down political associations and unions.

¹ *Mor İğne [Purple Needle], Our Body Belong to Us! Say No to Sexual Harassment Campaign*, Special Issue, p.1 (translation mine).

While the policies of the military regime temporarily closed the political arena, especially for the leftist movements, it meant an opening of opportunities for feminist groups. The changes in the political scene, especially the silencing of the leftist movements, provided women with the opportunity to voice their needs and to organize around their demands, without having them subordinated to other struggles based on class or ethnicity.² After the military coup of 1980, women activists on the left began to come together and started to discuss women's oppression apart from class oppression (Tekeli 1990).

The gender discourse of the Turkish state also shaped the political opportunity structure. The Kemalist discourse on gender equality, which had previously hindered women's autonomous activism, provided a legitimate political space for women's mobilization after the military coup (Arat 1991). As argued in Chapter 3, Kemalism constructed women's identities in contradictory ways: they were at once the modern and emancipated symbols of the new Western secular republic *and* the guardians and transmitters of Turkish culture and morality – a morality based on patriarchal norms. Because the paternalist Kemalist state had “given” women certain rights, most importantly the right to enter the public domain as equal citizens, feminists were able to exploit and politicize the contradictions of a gender discourse that cast them as *emancipated* in public and yet *subordinated* in the family. As the prevailing Kemalist gender discourse formed the part of the political opportunity structure, feminist activism

² The existing literature on women and democratization reveals that women tend to organize and pursue change when traditional political actors, including political parties, are banned, allowing women to formulate gender-based goals and agenda without subordinating them to class, ethnic, or national liberation struggles. See Jaquette (1994); (Basu 1995); Hensman (1996); Waylen (1996); Jaquette and Wolchik (1998).

was not perceived as a political threat to the state authority, either by the military regime or by subsequent governments.³

Gendered discourses, practices and institutions, not only in national but also in regional and global contexts, serve as opportunities (and sometimes as impediments) for feminist movements. Feminist movements often draw on the “emerging global gender equality regime” (Kardam 2004) to mobilize support for their demands to eradicate existing gender inequalities. Many of the demands that the feminist movement in Turkey have put to the democratically elected governments since 1983 have been influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which came out of the 1985 Nairobi Conference. Indeed, one of the first activities of the feminist movement organized was a petition campaign in 1986 urging the state to implement CEDAW, which was ratified by Turkey in 1985, albeit with reservations. Turkey’s decision to create the Directorate General on the Status and the Problems of Women (*Kadının Statüsü ve Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü – KSSGM*) stemmed from its need to comply with the recommendations of the Nairobi Conference. In more recent years, the possibility of EU membership has produced important collaborative efforts among different feminist groups and women’s NGOs, such as the Women for Women’s Human Rights – WWHR (*Kadının İnsan Hakları – Yeni Çözümler Vakfı*). These efforts have resulted in the creation of a network of many NGOs, which aims to monitor and pressure the Turkish state to effectively implement the international agreements which it signed and ratified. Thus, the existence of international agreements

³ Also, as Turkish feminists distanced themselves from the state and traditional political institutions, their activism was tolerated by first the military and then the subsequent democratically-elected governments in the 1980s.

and regional events can serve to create stronger, and most importantly, more permanent, links among feminist and non-feminist women's groups. In the 1980s, a strong international women's movement influenced a group of well-educated, middle class Turkish women, facilitating the emergence of a feminist movement in post-1980 Turkey.

Thus, the dominant Kemalist gender discourse, the temporary closure of the political arena after the 1980 military coup, the elimination of the left-wing movements, and the regional and global developments provided political opportunities which feminist groups seized. Yet, the emergence and development of social movements do not result only from political opportunities available for collective action. Movement formation and mobilization also depend on the availability of resources, such as funding, strategies, pre-existing organizations and social networks, and leadership (McCarthy and Zald 1977). One such important resource for the emergence of the feminist movement in Turkey was the previous involvement of women in leftist groups in the 1960s and 1970s. Through this involvement, women activists had been able to form friendships, social networks and later feminist consciousness-raising groups. Indeed, most of the feminist activists I interviewed knew other feminists from the leftist groups they had been involved with before the military intervention of 1980. Moreover, through their participation in leftist movements, women had acquired certain organizational skills, tactics, and strategies. More broadly, access to higher education, ability to speak foreign languages (such as English and French), and thus access to the books of Western feminist theorists had provided a group of Turkish women with resources and tools to mobilize feminist activism and generate feminist discourses.

Not surprisingly, feminist groups first emerged in big cities such as İstanbul and Ankara, and the majority of feminist activists were professional women with university degrees (such as academics, journalists, translators, doctors and teachers) and university students. Some feminist activists received their Master's or doctoral degrees in North America or Europe. As Sirman (1989: 19) observes, "most of the women in these groups, or at least those who are the more active organizers, have had first hand experience of life in the West, and have, as students, been associated with feminist activities in London or Paris". Through their participation in feminist collective activism in European countries, these women became familiar with feminist strategies for organization and mobilization.

Turkish Feminist Challenges to the Left & Kemalism and the Issue of Movement Autonomy in the 1980s and in the early 1990s

The Turkish feminist movement was comprised mainly of socialist feminists, radical feminists, non-aligned (*münferit*) feminists and Kemalist feminists. While socialist feminists in Turkey viewed feminist and socialist politics as closely linked, emphasizing the need to struggle against both class-based and gender-based oppression and exploitation, radical feminists refused to subordinate women's demands to the needs and interests of any other struggle.⁴ Radical feminists insisted on the autonomy of the feminist movement from any other movement or party. Non-aligned feminists, like Yaprak Zihnioğlu, rejected such labels as "radical" or "socialist", while emphasizing the

⁴ Interviews with Ayşe Düzkan (July 1, 1999) and Nesrin Tura (July 13, 1999) İstanbul, Turkey.

autonomy of the feminist activism.⁵ Radical, socialist, and non-aligned feminists were united not only in their opposition to women's oppression, but also in their criticisms of the Turkish left and Kemalism. This point will be explored in greater detail below.

Some women, who had been active in the leftist movements of the 1970s and the feminist movement in the 1980s, began to emphasize the importance of the Kemalist reforms in the late 1980s and in the 1990s, mainly in reaction to the visibility of veiled Islamist women in the public sphere. They were professional, well-educated, secular women who emphasized the importance of upholding Kemalist principles, threatened by the Islamist movement.⁶ Kemalist feminists differentiated themselves from the radical and socialist feminists, who were critical of the Kemalist project of modernity and supportive of the Islamist women's demand to wear headscarves at universities.⁷ Because these Kemalist feminists were active in the leftist movements in the 1970s, they also emphasized the necessity of fighting not only against the Islamist movements, but also against the capitalist system which oppresses women as cheap labour.⁸ This differentiated them from an earlier generation of Kemalist (egalitarian) women and activists like Nermin Abadan-Unat and Suna Kili.

⁵ Interview with Yaprak Zihniöđlu, August 12, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁶ These women began to publish the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World) in 1999.

⁷ Interview with Firdevs Gümüőđlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁸ Firdevs Gümüőđlu, one of the activists I interviewed, certainly belongs to this group of women. She is very critical of the feminist movement for the support it has given to the veiled Islamist women. During the interview, when asked about Kurdish feminists, she mentioned that she had a Kurdish ethnic background but she supported neither the PKK nor Kurdish feminists. She argued that Turkish nationalism, as espoused by Atatürk, created a national identity which was inclusive of all other ethnic identities in Turkey. Interview with Firdevs Gümüőđlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

As noted above, the Turkish feminist movement defined itself in relation to the Turkish left.⁹ Initially, most of these women had been involved in the leftist groups and organizations of the 1970s.¹⁰ They became disappointed because of the lack of attention given to gender issues in these organizations. The majority of the feminists I interviewed had been involved in leftist movements and organizations before 1980. One feminist activist explained that leftist men considered women as sisters (*bacı*), as sexless beings or female comrades, and thus ignored the specific problems women experienced based on their gender identities.¹¹ Feminist academic Fatmagül Berktay, drawing from her own personal experience and the interviews she conducted with leftist women, provides a similar account of the Turkish Left's attitude toward women:

One rather interesting argument utilized on the Left in Turkey to justify exercising control and supervision over women has been the idea that, precisely because they are women (purely on account of their gender, in other words), they have a greater tendency to 'go bourgeois'; it was therefore considered legitimate to exercise daily jurisdiction over their dress and behaviour. This is nothing more or less than a temporally and ideologically adjusted version of the ancient proposition, deeply ingrained in all monotheistic religions, according to which 'woman is closer to the devil' – or sometimes the devil himself. By the same token, women were considered 'an invitation to vice', along with drugs, gambling and alcohol; it was by way of defending itself against this danger that the Left came up with the 'sister' (*bacı*) stereotype. The rustic and folksy-sounding word *bacı*, drawn from provincial speech, denoted an unsexed, depersonalized kind of 'woman comrade'. Through the slogan 'The people are my only love, and all women are my sisters', male militants tried to protect themselves against women's potential for introducing discord (*fitna* in Islam) into revolutionary unity and solidarity (1995: 252).

⁹ Interview with Firdevs Gümüšoğlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

¹⁰ Interviews with Handan Koç (June 30, 1999), Ayşe Düzkan (July 1, 1999), Nesrin Tura (July 13, 1999), Yaprak Zihnioğlu (August 12, 1999) İstanbul, Turkey.

¹¹ Interview with Yaprak Zihnioğlu, August 12, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Berktaş added that women were expected to hide their sexuality, behave like men and “‘prove their worth’ by throwing themselves wholeheartedly into the struggle ... it was always women who had to prove themselves, and who remained bourgeois until and unless they did so” (1995: 253). One feminist explained that when she disagreed with her leftist partner in an informal gathering, she was “‘taught her place”.

Feminist activists also argued that women were excluded from decision-making bodies and were often assigned what was considered to be women’s tasks such as typing and washing the dishes, rather than street activism.¹² Ironically, this was probably one of the reasons why many female leftist activists were not sent to prisons or were jailed only for a brief period of time under the military regime. According to Handan Koç, a prominent radical feminist, women got together and started to talk about their experiences in the leftist movements after their husbands, partners, boyfriends, and comrades were jailed.¹³ It was during this period that they formed the first feminist consciousness-raising groups in İstanbul.

Indeed, informal meetings at homes and consciousness-raising groups constituted the basic organizational form of the feminist movement in the early 1980s for two main reasons. First, because of the ban imposed by the military regime, it was illegal to form formal organizations and organize any formal meetings. Second, because they were influenced by Western feminist theory and practice *and* because of their experiences in hierarchical organizational structures of leftist movements, Turkish feminists adopted non-hierarchical organizational forms, such as small, autonomous, consciousness-raising groups.

¹² Interview with Yaprak Zihnioğlu, August 12, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

¹³ Interview with Handan Koç, June 30, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Throughout the 1980s and in the early 1990s, the relationship between the feminist movement and the left as well as the issue of *movement autonomy* was extensively discussed on the pages of feminist periodicals *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* and *Feminist*. Both socialist and radical feminists criticized the failure of the Turkish left in coming terms with the specificity of women's oppression. According to İlknur Kalan:

So far the mistake the leftist movement made has been to view women's struggles for their *special* [gender-based] demands as an obstacle to the struggle for *general* demands ... Through our experiences [within the leftist movement] we realized that we cannot achieve our liberation by trusting others. Hence, there is a need for the women's movement both in pre-socialist societies and after the revolution (1990: 51, translation and emphasis mine).

In the first three issues of *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs*, socialist feminists (see Tura 1988a, 1988b, 1988c) criticized the Turkish left for its economic reductionist and top-down approach to the "woman question", for viewing the oppression of women as stemming exclusively from capitalism. Socialist feminists view feminism and socialism as two separate, yet complementary, forms of political struggle (Sirman 1989: 21). Capitalism and male-dominant sexist system are intertwined in such a way that they are inseparable. They argued that "male-dominated sexist system has always existed in articulation with modes of production" (*Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* 1: 9) and "today just as sexist system cannot be considered as a system separate from capitalism; similarly capitalism is not independent of sexism" (*ibid.* 15). For socialist feminists, socialism, as an ideology and a social project, is a struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation, and thus, it is open to feminism (*ibid.* 15):

[N]ot only will there not be feminism without socialism, but also socialism cannot be fully realized without feminism. Socialism is a system which can provide the material conditions for women's liberation. The reproductive role of women (taking care of husband and children and children's education) in the capitalist system is not a necessary role in a society with no aim for profit and with collective ownership. The socialization of housework and childcare could prevent woman from being trapped in the house just because she procreates ... these could only be achieved through the struggle of an autonomous women's movement against male domination after the socialist revolution. These are the necessary conditions for women's liberation and they can be realized within a socialist system as long as **women fight for them** (*ibid.* 15-16, translation mine).

Also, since feminism neither "proposes a social project" nor "aims for political power", socialist feminists were supportive of socialism because it puts forward such a social project, one that does not exclude feminism (*ibid.* 16). As Sirman (1989: 22) argues, socialist feminists viewed feminism not "as an addition to", but "as a corrective of socialism". For socialist feminists, as "socialism does not automatically bring about women's liberation" (Kalan 1990: 51), women should wage struggles to combat their oppression as women:

Capitalism also oppresses men ... [but] women are oppressed and exploited in ways different than men and men are benefiting from this situation. At least, they are not contesting it. We cannot say that "one form of oppression is better than another". As women we should explore our oppression, analyze the unique conditions and struggle to change the existing situation [of women] (Kalan 1990: 47, translation mine).

Ayşe Düzkan, a prominent radical feminist, however, defined patriarchy as a "different mode of production":

It is interlocked with capitalism, it has been tightly interwoven ... patriarchy is not there for capitalism to continue; we can even say that, they clash with each other at certain points; I don't know whether it would

be correct to call it a system but these are two different systems existing side by side, giving concessions to each other. ... The first thing we see when we look at women's world is patriarchy. Capitalism also exploits women, it abuses them... You can say many things but before this we must ask what transformations patriarchy goes through; we have to look at this first ... In this world, capitalism is a matter of only yesterday whereas patriarchy is a very old system. Of course, capitalism would not undo it, why should it? Capitalism uses whatever suits its purpose; it is a social order that starts from what it finds, that builds on whatever it finds. Capitalism found patriarchy; all modes of production have discovered patriarchy anyway (1994: 148).

On the pages of *Feminist*, radical feminists emphasized over and over again that struggles for women's liberation could only be waged autonomously from other struggles based on class or ethnicity (see, for instance, S. Nur 1988, Ovadia 1989; Handan 1989). According to Füsün, a radical feminist:

Women's liberation is possible only if there is a movement organized *by* women and *for* women. Other than the women's own movement, no class, group, politics, power, or movement can rescue women from oppression and exploitation. The main reason behind our view is the inadequacy of the oppositional [leftist] movements until the women's movement emerged. Our standpoint is to search for radical politics that can bring about women's liberation. We believe that the liberation of women is possible only with radical politics and when women struggle for it (1989: 5, translation and emphasis mine).

Düzkan (1989) argued that feminists need to be wary, at all times, of those who attempt to incorporate women's struggles into other social and political struggles, be it class struggle or struggles for democracy. For Düzkan, the struggle for women's liberation should take priority over the struggle for all other forms of liberation and women must refuse to subordinate their demands to the needs of any other struggle.

It is not surprising, then, that the most immediate opposition to the feminist movement came from the Turkish left. In the mid-1980s, the segments of the left that

survived the harsh military rule (1980-1983), while recognizing the existence of a “woman’s question”, were united in their criticism of feminism as a “divisive”, “bourgeois”, and counter-revolutionary movement. Some leftists used the label “Septemberist” (*Eylülist*) to refer to the feminist movement because it emerged right after the military coup of September 12, 1980, which crushed the left. For some leftists, this revealed the bourgeois and collaborative character of the feminist movement (Berktaş 1995, Tekeli 1989b: 40).

In 1989, the first nationwide two-day Women’s General Assembly (*Birinci Kadın Kurultayı*), in which about 2500 women participated, was held in İstanbul (*Milliyet* May 22, 1989; *Cumhuriyet* May 22, 1989). The Assembly was especially significant as it became a site where differences among feminist groups (radical and socialist) and leftist women became visible (Tekeli 1989a; also see *Feminist*, issue 6). During the meetings in the Women’s Assembly, both radical and socialist feminist groups highlighted the necessity of organizing *autonomously* from other groups, especially from male-dominated leftist groups. They also pointed to the importance of addressing the “private” issues (domestic violence and sexuality) and exposing the oppression women suffer because of their gender. Leftist women, however, emphasized the importance of organizing together with men, accusing feminists of dividing the left (Paker 1988b). Leftist women and men argued that there was no need for an independent feminist movement (*İkibine Doğru*, May 21, 1989). While recognizing the importance of class oppression, socialist and radical feminists insisted that feminists should organize *autonomously* and define their own agendas and strategies to combat gender-based

oppression. Because an alliance with the left would have meant co-optation of the movement (Paker 1988b), feminists struggled to distance themselves from the left.

As argued in Chapter 2, in non-Western contexts of modernity when feminists expose the authoritarian, patriarchal institutions, practices and codes of their societies, they are condemned as “traitors”. Feminist movements are viewed as Western “imports”, as imitations of Western feminism, that do not fit into non-Western contexts. Leftists and Islamist men and women¹⁴ attacked the Turkish feminist movement for imitating the West but feminists responded by reminding the leftists that “Marxism did not arise in the plateaus of Konya either” (Düzkan 1997: 2; also see Tura 1988b: 16).¹⁵ The possibility of an “indigenous” feminism (*yerli feminizm*) in Turkey has also been discussed by radical feminists on the pages of *Pazartesi* (see issue 30, September 1997). Düzkan (1997) argued that while Turkish feminists learned about feminism from their Western sisters, they could still take issue with both modernity and Westernization, and they could still produce indigenous feminist politics. Ferhunde Özbay (1997), a feminist sociologist, pointed to the necessity of a feminist movement which would both develop out of *local* conditions or as a result of local historical forces *and* make claims for *universal* rights.

As argued in Chapter 3, gender identities and relations in Turkey have been shaped largely by the Kemalist project of modernity. Thus, the feminist movement (with the exception of Kemalist feminists) broke not only with the Turkish left but also with Kemalism. In the early 1980s, feminist scholars and activists started to criticize the Kemalist discourse on gender equality by pointing to the limits of the Kemalist reforms for women. Some pointed to the strategic nature of these reforms (Tekeli 1981; Kandiyoti

¹⁴ For the criticisms levelled against Turkish feminism by Islamist women see Chapter 6.

¹⁵ Konya is a conservative city located in Central Anatolia.

1989; 1991b). For Kandiyoti (1989), the emancipation of women was one of the “symbolic pawns” in the Kemalist struggle to break with the Islamic institutions and laws of the Ottoman polity. Gender inequalities in the civil code of 1926 were also criticized, particularly articles stating that the “husband is the head of the family”, “the wife is required to obtain her husband’s permission to work”, and “the wife uses the husband’s family name” (Tekeli 1992: 140–141). They argued that the Kemalist discourse of gender equality obscured unequal and hierarchical power relations between men and women within the family.

Feminist scholars and activists have taken a critical stance against Kemalism. By emphasizing women’s subjectivity, independence and difference, feminists have problematized the organicist discourse of Kemalist nationalism.¹⁶ As argued in Chapter 3, the Kemalist project of modernity encouraged women to take part in public life as national actors even while it placed limits on women’s activism (Kandiyoti 1991a). The organicist understanding of Kemalist nationalism circumscribed the emancipation of women since women’s interests were subordinated to the needs and interests of the Turkish nation. As the sexist standards of morality were left unchanged, women were expected to hide their sexuality in order to participate as citizens in the public sphere of

¹⁶ During the interviews, when asked about their views on nationalism, most Turkish feminists reacted strongly, saying that they have nothing to say about, or to do with, nationalism. There are two terms for nationalism in Turkish: *milliyetçilik* and *ulusçuluk*. The first term, which derives from the Ottoman word *millet* (originally referring to “religious” but now to “national” community), is used by liberals and conservatives alike. The latter term derives from the modern Turkish word *ulus* (nation) and is preferred by left-wing nationalists. It is often possible to identify the political orientation of a person in Turkey simply by paying attention to the term(s) s/he employs while referring to “nation” and “nationalism”. Most of the feminists (Turkish and Kurdish) I interviewed used the term *ulusçuluk*, which reflects their involvement in left-wing movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

the new Republic. In the male-dominated public domain women acquired new skills to “veil” their sexuality (see Durakbaşa 1998: 149). By demanding recognition for the repressed side of their identity, that is female sexuality, feminists also challenged the image of the “Turkish woman” as a sexless being, as constructed by the Kemalist nationalist discourse (as well as the leftist movements). As will be discussed below, through different campaigns, protests and publishing books and journals, feminists not only demanded full control over their bodies and sexuality, but also challenged the dominant cultural codes of sexual morality.

In this context it is important to mention Duygu Asena, a feminist journalist and writer, whose works challenged the existing norms of sexuality and morality in Turkey. Asena was the editor of *Kadınca* (Womanly), a woman’s magazine began to be published in 1978, a magazine which openly discussed questions relating to female sexuality and body (for more on *Kadınca* see Öztürkmen 1998). In her famous novel *Kadının Adı Yok* (*Woman Has no Name*), published in 1987, Asena dealt with issues such as female sexuality, virginity, female pleasure, divorce, and sexual relationship outside marriage.¹⁷ The female image the main protagonist projected in the novel (independent, strong, sexually active, working woman), which was welcome by a large group of young female university students and middle-class, urban, professional women, challenged the Kemalist representations of ideal Turkish women as sexless beings in the public sphere.

As Ayşe Düzkan argued, Kemalist women and women’s organizations neither questioned the Kemalist discourse of gender equality nor the state:

¹⁷ *Kadının Adı Yok* was the first feminist novel I read. When the book was published I was attending Boğaziçi University in İstanbul. It was the most popular novel among the female students on campus.

... with the foundation of the Republic, the state has already adopted a policy for women. This was one of the areas of state policy, and when an alternative or anti-establishment policy began to be generated concerning this matter, the old policy came back as a haunting ghost. There is nothing strange about this. Now, when do we see the Kemalists, that is the Kemalist women, opposing us? You see Nermin Abadan, coming up and telling stories like, “one day, when I was sleeping, Atatürk came along, patted my head and said ‘you’ll make it, my dear girl’ and he sent me to school”. The interesting thing is that nobody said anything in Turkey about why the state had a policy for women until the feminists came along. I think it was Şirin Tekeli who first began to write on this subject. Why did the state in Turkey, while the Republic was being founded, adopt a policy for women? Why did it declare certain things for their liberation? What do all these things mean? Feminists began to think about these matters. There is something very strange in Turkey. Even those who are strongly opposed to the state do not make an analysis of the state. There is no effort to find out how the Republic was founded. These are also things that came to be discussed recently in Turkey (1994: 146).

Indeed, neither radical nor socialist feminists viewed the state as an agent for women’s empowerment. Given the history of “state feminism” of Kemalism, the feminist movement consistently sought to distance itself from the state. For instance, the state established the *Kadının Statüsü ve Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü – KSSGM* (Directorate General on the Status and the Problems of Women) in 1990, mainly as a response to the recommendations of the Nairobi Conference of 1985. Affiliated with the Prime Ministry, KSSGM was established as a national mechanism for formulating policies and programs to empower women and promote their equality with men in social, cultural, economic and political life. Feminist groups, however, criticized KSSGM’s intention to “regulate” and “control” the activities of independent women’s associations, as stated in the original bill (Berik 1990; also Acuner 2002: 132-144). After much debate, a revised version of the bill became law in October 1990 (See Berik 1990). However, many feminist groups and

women's associations remain critical of KSSGM and skeptical about achieving women's empowerment through the state.¹⁸

Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur (1995: 1-2) define "state feminism" as "activities of government structures that are formally charged with furthering women's status and rights". Within the Turkish context, Şirin Tekeli uses the term to refer to the state policies that seek to improve women's status in society. The existing work on state feminism (Stetson and Mazur 1995) focuses on liberal democracies, where the state is viewed as a neutral institution if not a benign, friendly one. As the Turkish case reveals, state feminism may not operate in similar ways in newly democratic or authoritarian states as it does in liberal democracies. States may introduce policies for women for reasons other than women's empowerment. This may undermine the states' commitment and ability to promote women's issues and to address inequalities between men and women. As argued in the previous chapter, the Kemalist nationalist discourse both encouraged and constrained women's agency. Women were allowed to articulate their interests only within the boundaries prescribed by the nationalist discourse (Kandiyoti 1991a). In non-democratic or democratizing states, then, feminist scholars and activists tend to approach state initiatives with skepticism. The creation of national machineries also helps states to assert control over women's activism and discourses. It serves to strengthen the state, reinforcing its power vis-à-vis societal actors.

The majority of radical and socialist feminist scholars and activists in Turkey view the state as a capitalist, patriarchal institution with an agenda that works against women's interests. They do not view the Turkish state as an arena for interest articulation

¹⁸ Interview with Ayşe Düzkan, July 1, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

and representation, adopting a discourse *against* the state. “State feminism” is defined as state controlled women’s organizations and institutions that often act against the interests of women. From this perspective, state feminist initiatives do not change women’s situation but rather maintain existing unequal power relations that subordinate and marginalize women. As will be discussed below, the national machinery KSSGM in Turkey has fallen short of transforming existing gender hierarchies in Turkish society. “State feminism”, then, is not a term with which feminist scholars and women on the ground identify, as it is associated with the Turkish state’s instrumental use of women rather than with the promotion of women’s interests. Unlike socialist, radical and non-aligned feminists, Kemalist feminists emphasize the need to cooperate with the state. Indeed, one of their main goals is to defend and expand the gains women in Turkey made as a result of the Kemalist reforms. They seek to fully establish gender equality in Turkish legal and political system.

One of the most important characteristics of the Turkish feminist movement, then, has been its *autonomy*. For socialist, radical and non-aligned feminists, autonomy has meant organizational independence from the state, political parties, and other social/political movements and organizations as well as theoretical autonomy of gender oppression and exploitation from class inequalities. They argued that women’s empowerment requires feminist organizations *autonomous* from the male-dominated leftist movements, state-controlled women’s organizations, and traditional political actors. As we shall see below, this strong emphasis on the *autonomy* of the feminist movement and the feminist resistance to engage with the state did not undermine the goal to achieve women’s empowerment in Turkey.

Turkish Feminist Collective Activism and Discourses in the 1980s and early 1990s

Most feminists I interviewed pointed to the series of articles, feminist in content, published in the journal *Somut*, in İstanbul in 1983 as the beginning of feminist collective activism in Turkey.¹⁹ This publishing experience with YAZKO, however, was short-lived as feminists withdrew into consciousness-raising groups in order to come up with better strategies for feminist mobilization (Tekeli 1986: 197). In 1984, they formed the Woman's Circle (*Kadın Çevresi*) in İstanbul, an autonomous corporation which translated and published works of Western feminists, like Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millet, in Turkish (Tekeli 1986: 197). In 1987, feminist consciousness-raising groups, such as the Thursday Group (*Perşembe Grubu*), also emerged in Ankara.

Throughout the 1980s, feminist groups held conferences, organized meetings, and set up new associations such as the Association of Women against Discrimination (*Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Derneği*) in İstanbul (1987) and the Foundation for Women's Solidarity (*Kadın Dayanışma Derneği*) in Ankara (1989).²⁰ In the late 1980s and in the early 1990s, the groups comprising the Turkish feminist movement adopted several different forms of activism such as issue-based campaigns, street protests, signing petitions, publishing journals and pamphlets, organizing festivals, meetings and conferences to challenge the sexist practices and cultural codes and norms in Turkey and to make public the oppression of women despite the egalitarian discourse of the state. One of the first activities of the feminist group Woman's Circle was to organize a petition campaign in 1986 urging the Turkish state to implement the United Nations Convention

¹⁹ Interview with Stella Ovadia, August 10, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

²⁰ Interview with Firdevs Gümüsoğlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Turkey in 1985 with reservations. 7000 women signed the petition (Sirman 1989: 16). As argued earlier, the existence of international conferences or treaties can create opportunities for mobilization of women. Turkey's decision to sign the CEDAW provided women with a political opportunity structure, which feminists seized to push for their demands.

Domestic violence against women and sexual harassment occupied a central place on the agenda of the feminist movement in the late 1980s.²¹ In 1987, the Woman's Circle, the Association of Women against Discrimination and a group of socialist and non-aligned feminists organized the campaign "Solidarity against Battering" (*Dayağa Karşı Dayanışma Kampanyası*) to draw attention to domestic violence against women. This campaign was initially launched as a response to a judge who refused to allow the divorce of a pregnant woman beaten by her husband.²² The judge claimed that it was a man's right to beat his wife, referring to a common saying "men should neither leave a woman's back without a stick, nor her womb without a baby". Feminists argued that this verdict both insulted women and legitimized wife-battering (Filiz K. 1987: 6). A group of feminists from the Woman's Circle and from the journal *Feminist* sued the judge. Feminists also organized a march in the streets of İstanbul in May 17, 1987 to expose and protest against domestic violence against women (*Sabah* May 18, 1987). About 3000 women participated in the rally (Sirman 1989: 1).

²¹ Abortion has not occupied a central place on the feminist platform as it has been legalized by the military regime in May 1983 (Tekeli 1986: 190).

²² Interview with Filiz Kerestecioglu, July 29, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

In Ankara on Mother's Day in 1987 a small group of feminists staged a protest in one of the main squares both to show their solidarity with the feminists in İstanbul and to expose the fact that women, while respected as mothers in Turkish society, are often victims of domestic violence (Sirman 1989: 17). In October that year, feminists also organized a one-day festival in İstanbul. Through songs, slogans, banners, and posters the festival organizers sought to draw public attention to violence against women and raise money to establish shelters for battered women (Paker 1988a). In 1988, a book titled *Bağır! Herkes Duysun (Shout! Be Heard)*, which included the testimonies of women who were victims of domestic violence, was published. These testimonies revealed that women in Turkey were systematically being abused by male members of the family (including male members of their extended families such as uncles and cousins). The campaign "Solidarity against Battering" got extensive coverage in the media, giving feminists an opportunity to identify and criticize the family as a site for male domination and women's oppression. Feminist groups also launched the "Purple Needle Campaign" (*Mor İğne Kampanyası*) in November 1989 against sexual harassment of women on the streets during the day and night, in public buses, and in the workplace, by distributing thousands of purple pin needles to women in public places. The main slogan of the campaign was "Our Body Belong to Us! Say No to Sexual Harassment!".

As noted earlier, the feminist movement is critical of Kemalist state feminism. While Kemalism provided women with opportunities, it did not deal with women's oppression in the private sphere. In fact, as we saw in Chapter 3, the Kemalist project expected Turkish women to be both educated, modern, professional, active citizens in the public sphere and devoted, self-sacrificing mothers and wives, performing their

traditional social roles in the family. It is not surprising, then, that through these campaigns, the Turkish feminist movement, has exposed the oppressive, authoritarian, and hierarchical relations between men and women in the family, challenging the official Kemalist rhetoric of gender equality. Both radical and socialist feminists point to the family as the major site of domination and violence against women (See Düzkan 1995; *Pazartesi* 33). Socialist feminists, for instance, argued that women's oppression stems from their work in the family and the economy.²³ For both socialist feminists and radical feminists, family is an institution through which men and the male-dominated state control women's labour power and sexuality and regulate female reproductive capacities (*Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* 1: 7). Radical and socialist feminists criticized the state's attempts at strengthening the unity of the traditional family, through institutions such as the Family Research Institute, arguing that the state aims to protect and strengthen the head of the family, i.e. men, rather than the family itself (See Ateş 1995; Düzkan 1995). Feminists questioned the motherhood role assigned to women, arguing that it traps women inside the private sphere and prevents them from pursuing their dreams (education, career) in the public sphere (Koçali 1987).

The feminist movement, however, is not only about posing challenges at the level of everyday life. Indeed, the story of the feminist movement in Turkey cannot be told without referring to the state. Turkish feminism adopted a "dualistic strategy" that simultaneously targeted civil society and the state. Although many feminists continually sought to distance themselves from institutionalized politics, the Turkish state remained a constant referent for feminist activism. For instance, the campaign "Solidarity against

²³ Interview with Nesrin Tura, July 13, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Battering” was directed against the dominant sexist codes and norms of Turkish society and against a state, which endorsed violence against women.

Feminists also engaged with the state to influence policies concerning women. As a result of feminist protests, Article 438 of the Turkish Penal Code, relating to rape and reducing the sentence if the victim is a prostitute, was abolished in 1990. To achieve this result, about 1000 women participated in the protest walks, organized by 40 feminist activists. Article 159 of the Civil Code, which required women to get their husband’s authorization if they wanted to work, was also nullified by the Constitutional Court in 1990. In December 1989, the Family Research Institute (*Aile Araştırma Kurumu*), affiliated with one of the ministries of the state, was set up to protect and strengthen the unity of “the Muslim-Turkish family”, which was argued to be disintegrating partly as a result of women working outside the home (Berik 1990: 93-94). Feminist and non-feminist women’s groups and organizations protested the establishment of the Institute and its aim to formulate a national policy on family through the National Family Council (see, for instance, N. Arat 1991; Koçali 1990). In 1990, 30 women applied to courts for divorce to protest the state’s attempt at strengthening the traditional family. Although only six couples got a divorce, this protest drew much public attention (Pazartesi, 1995 (7): 22). During the same year, feminists protested against Minister Cemil Çiçek, who made statements such as “feminism is perversity” (“feminizm sapıklıktır”) and “flirting is not different from prostitution” (“flört fuhuşturlar”), by blowing whistles on the streets of İstanbul (*ibid.* 23). Eleven feminist activists were arrested by the police.

Some feminist groups started to publish their own alternative feminist journals. During the 1980s there were two feminist periodicals: *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* and

Feminist. In March 1987, women who identified themselves as “radical feminists” started to publish *Feminist*, while socialist feminists gathered around the journal *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* in May 1988.²⁴ Through these journals feminists aimed to communicate their messages to women and to the general public, and to fight against sexism.

From the late 1980s into the early 1990s, Turkish feminists articulated their discourses on the pages of these two journals. They identified male dominance in society and in the institutions such as the state, family, education and legal systems as the main problem that women in Turkey have been facing. They argued that women share common gender oppression and they should organize and wage autonomous struggles on all fronts for their liberation. Most of the articles published in these journals concerned the problem of domestic violence against women and sexual harassment in the workplace (see, for instance, *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* 1, 9; *Feminist* 2). Feminists identified not only the family but also the education system as patriarchal, arguing that textbooks used in schools and teaching methods are all gendered. They reflect a male perspective and aim to teach women (and men) their proper gender roles (Helvacioğlu 1996).²⁵ The education system also prepares women for such jobs considered as feminine as they require nurturing and caring and pay less (Gök 1989; Helvacioğlu 1996). Feminists pointed to unfair working conditions for women. They argued, however, that working

²⁴ Şahika Yüksel, August 5, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

²⁵ Analyzing the textbooks used in primary and secondary schools from 1928 to 1995 for their gender content (textual and visual), Firdevs Helvacioğlu-Gümüšoğlu (1996) concludes that while during the single party era (1923-1950), especially in the first two decades of the Turkish Republic, the textbooks represented women as modern and equal with men both in the public sphere and in the family, the textbooks prepared after 1950 represented women (often wearing aprons in the kitchen) as devoted mothers and housewives and girls as helping their mothers with cleaning and cooking.

outside home could help women to gain their economic independence and power²⁶, which could in turn result in their participation in the decision-making process in the household. Some feminists also argue that even when women are employed outside home, they are expected to fulfill their responsibilities as housewives. Indeed, women's domestic work is not considered as "work" but as their natural duties, and hence undervalued (Savran 1989). Both socialist and radical feminists also highlighted the amount of (unpaid) work women do at home. They argued that through the services they provide in the family, women not only serve men but also the capitalist system.

In sum, while Kemalist feminists focused on the transformations in the public sphere, radical, socialist and non-aligned feminists highlighted the necessity of challenging and transforming both the public and private spheres. For them, this was necessary for women's empowerment and liberation (*Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* 1988, Koçali 1987). Adopting the second-wave Western feminist slogan "the personal is political", the feminist movement launched several campaigns, organized protests, conferences, meetings and festivals, and published journals. Turkish feminists challenged the traditional boundaries between the public and private spheres by turning so-called "private" issues into political ones, and, thus expanded the content of the political. Collective mobilization and political activism have empowered many women to challenge the boundaries of the Kemalist nationalist discourse, defining their own priorities, setting their own agendas and, seeking structural changes in unequal power relations between women and men.

²⁶ Interview with Ayşe Düzkan, July 1, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Despite the limited effects of these campaigns, feminist activism made such “private” issues as domestic violence and sexual harassment public, attracting the attention of the public, the media and the governments. At the beginning of the twenty-first century feminist and non-feminist groups initiated campaigns to press the government to reform the existing Turkish Civil and Penal Codes to make them more “women-friendly”. The legal gains are discussed in the next section. Moreover, while socialist and radical feminists adopted a stance highly critical of the state and emphasized the necessity of organizing outside (and against) state institutions in the 1980s and early 1990s, in the mid-1990s, some segments of the feminist movement have viewed the state as a potential vehicle for gender-based social and political change and highlighted the importance of forging links between the movement and institutionalized politics. These developments will be discussed below.

2. The Institutionalization of the Turkish Feminist Movement in the 1990s: From Autonomy to a “Politics of Presence”

In the 1990s feminist groups and organizations did not launch major campaigns such as the “Solidarity against Battering”. There are several reasons for this. First, feminist campaigns had only limited support, mostly from educated, middle-class, professional, urban women and the campaigns, meetings, and festivals were mostly organized in urban areas. Thus, the feminist movement had failed to build a real mass base. According to Nesrin Tura, one of the prominent socialist feminists, the repressive policies of the military regime during the early 1980s prevented the movement from broadening its

base.²⁷ Second, as Banu Paker (1988a) argues, the campaign “Solidarity against Battering” marked a turning point in women’s organizing, as the campaign had eschewed a hierarchical and a central organizational structure. Because feminists valued non-hierarchical, non-centralized forms of organizations, they preferred to organize around issue-based campaigns. Campaign committees, which included different feminist and women’s groups, dissolved once the campaigns were over.

The issues of authority and elitism were also much discussed among feminists and on the pages of feminist journals in the 1980s. As radical feminist Ayşe Düzkan notes:

There were a lot of discussions on authority among feminists. In Turkey, it was feminists more than anarchists who discussed authority. That is to say, there are some women who have worked as university professors for years; of course, they know how to talk very well. Women who have taught at universities have more to say on such subjects (1994: 152).

Düzkan also observed that in the 1980s many feminists had complained about elitism among feminists, reacting against those feminists who had academic backgrounds or could speak foreign languages.²⁸ The perception of the feminist movement as an elitist movement could be one of the reasons why the movement did not have mass appeal and, thus, failed to become a mass movement.

The issues of movement *autonomy*, and *authority* and *hierarchy* within the movement were also widely debated in the 1990s.²⁹ One of the reasons for the continued discussions on the autonomy of feminist activism was the challenges raised by Kurdish

²⁷ Interview with Nesrin Tura, July 13, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

²⁸ Interview with Ayşe Düzkan, July 1, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

²⁹ See especially the articles by Handan Koç (1998) and Filiz Koçali (1998) in *Pazartesi* 37; also see *Roza* no. 9, 13.

feminists in the late 1990s, who argued that it is possible to wage struggles for women's rights as both feminists and nationalists. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the 1990s the main feminist activism consisted of the meetings or gatherings on the streets for March 8 International Women's Day celebrations. Indeed, the 1990s witnessed the institutionalization of the some segments of the Turkish feminist movement. In April 1990, a group of feminists founded the Women's Library and Information Center (*Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi*) which collects books, periodicals, articles, documents, statistical data and newspaper clippings related to women's issues. The Library also carries out different projects, sponsored by the Directorate General on the Status and the Problems of Women (KSSGM), such as the Women's Oral History Pilot Project (*Kadın Sözlü Tarih Pilot Projesi*).

Feminists also engaged in knowledge production. In the 1990s, women's studies centers were established in major Turkish universities. Feminists also founded the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation (*Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı*) in İstanbul in 1990 and Altındağ Women's Shelter (*Altındağ Kadın Sığınağı Evi*) in Ankara in 1991, with the aim of providing shelter and protection for women exposed to domestic violence. In addition, the Purple Roof foundation provides women with services such as psychological and legal advice, and skill and vocational training (Arat 1998). In 1998, the first assembly of Women's Shelters (*Kadın Sığınakları Kurultayı*) was held. Recently, a consulting center (*Kadın Hakları Uygulama Merkezi*) within the İstanbul Bar Association has been founded by a group of female lawyers to provide legal advice for women.³⁰

³⁰ Interview with Filiz Kerestecioğlu, July 29, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

In the 1990s one of the main problems the feminist movement faced was finding funding to maintain newly established feminist organizations. Due to the lack of funding, the women's shelter established by the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation in İstanbul in 1995 was closed in 1998. Thus, most feminist organizations competed for funding from Western feminist as well as international organizations. Gülnur Savran (1998) and Yelda (personal correspondence 1998), two prominent Turkish feminists, call this trend within the movement "project feminism" (*proje feminizmi*). For instance, the journal *Pazartesi* received funding first from the German Frauen-Anstiftung and the Heinrich Boll Association, and then the American Global Fund for Women. The feminist organization in Ankara *Uçan Süpürge* (the Flying Broom), which also publishes the bulletin *Uçan Haber*, received funding from an American organization and the International Women's Health Coalition.³¹ The Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation) was funded by German and Dutch women's organizations.

During their formative phase in the 1980s and early 1990s, feminist groups emphasized the importance of *autonomy* for women's empowerment, distancing themselves from the left, the Turkish state, and political parties. In the mid-1990s, however, some feminists began to highlight the necessity of addressing the issue of women's exclusion from the political process.³² Thus, feminist politics in Turkey started to shift toward what Anne Phillips (1996) calls a "politics of presence". Indeed, in March 1997, a group of feminist and non-feminist activists founded the Association for Support and Training of Woman Candidates (*Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği* –

³¹ *Uçan Süpürge* has also been organizing an annual International Women's Film Festival in Ankara since 1998.

³² Interviews with Nükhet Sirman, August 12, 1999 (feminist academic and member of KA-DER) and Zülâl Kılıç, May 9, 2001 (then chairwoman of KA-DER).

KA-DER) in İstanbul with the motto “equality in politics, justice in representation” (*KA-DER Bülteni*, 1997 (1)). Indeed, in Turkey, women are underrepresented in the parliament as well as in other decision-making bodies. In the last general elections held in November 2002 only 24 women (4.4% of the 550 MPs) were elected to the parliament. KA-DER mainly seeks to increase women’s representation in political decision-making structures, especially in the parliament, by providing support and training to female candidates who embrace its principles (*KA-DER Tüzük* 1997).³³ These principles include working for the elimination of discrimination against women and a commitment to voice women’s concerns. Other than organizing training or educational programs, KA-DER also launches campaigns and organizes workshops to inform women of their political rights. KA-DER also aims to help establish strong links between the feminist movement and female politicians.

Feminists who are skeptical about achieving women’s empowerment through a patriarchal state have, however, criticized KA-DER for helping women enter the male-dominated parliament without challenging the existing gender hierarchies (Savran and Tura 1997: 10-11). They have argued that the abstract notion of equality, which underlies KA-DER’s aims and strategies, fails to take into account structured inequalities, based on gender, class and ethnicity, which impose constraints on women’s political activity (*ibid.* 10). Indeed, rather than advocating *equality* between women and men, both socialist and radical feminists aim to transform the existing patriarchal and capitalist system, which, through sexual division of labour, create and perpetuate unequal power relations between

³³ KA-DER has 11 branches (in Ankara, İzmir, Eskişehir, Balıkesir, Samsun, Adana, Mersin, Manisa, Antalya and Denizli) and 1000 registered members.

men and women in all spheres of life. Thus, women's liberation from male oppression is more crucial than achieving equality. As socialist feminist Nesrin Tura argues:

Within the patriarchal system, equality would be based on male-dominated standards. We do not want to be equal with men based on their rules; we want to destroy those rules ... We do not want equality, we want compensation. We want positive discrimination for women (1989: 63).

Indeed, both socialist and radical feminists support positive discrimination toward women as a strategy to improve women's status (Savran and Tura 1997).

Another criticism of KA-DER is the absence of a clearly specified program on the basis of which women will be represented (*ibid.* 11 and Bora 1997: 5). Also, the diversity of women's interests complicates representation. Since it is difficult to talk about women's common interests due to the diversity of women, whose interests will actually be represented? Some critics believe that the feminist movement must maintain its autonomy to avoid co-optation (Bora 1997: 5). Others, however, call for affirmative action strategies, such as the introduction of quotas for women (Savran and Tura 1997), or the creation of a feminist party in the future.³⁴

Furthermore, some feminist activists have started to work within the KSSGM, the state machinery established in 1990 to improve women's status in society. KSSGM carried out several important projects, with the financial support of international organizations and formulated policies to enhance women's empowerment in economic and social life.³⁵ The "Micro Enterprises Project", financed by the donation provided by

³⁴ Interview with Ayşe Düzkan, July 1, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

³⁵ For details on these projects, see KSSGM 1996 and KSSGM, *Projects*, retrieved December 1999 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/projeeng.htm> and

the Japanese Grant Funds through the World Bank, examined the credit policies of the banking sector and the difficulties women entrepreneurs encounter when applying for credit. The “Women’s Employment Promotion Project” (WEP), supported by the World Bank, aimed to formulate policies to provide women with equal employment opportunities. Within the framework of this project, several studies were conducted by research teams composed mostly of feminist academics on issues such as the effects of economic restructuring on women’s employment, gender-based discrimination at workplaces and women’s employment in the garment industry, the service sector and the food industry.³⁶ The policy recommendations of KSSGM include the application of positive discrimination for women and the elimination of legal barriers that discourage women from entering the workforce.³⁷ KSSGM also founded an information center (*Bilgi Başvuru Bankası*), which provides both legal and psychological guidance to women exposed to violence, and marketing facilities for women’s handicrafts.

Women Employment Project retrieved December 1999 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/engpro.html>.

³⁶ For other studies on the effects of neo-liberal economic restructuring on women in Turkey by feminist academics see Çağatay (1994) and Ecevit (1998). According to Çağatay (1994), the neo-liberal economic restructuring of the 1980s did not lead to an increase in female employment. She argues that even though there is an increase in urban women’s participation in the labour-force, this does not point to a “feminization of employment” but rather to a “feminization of unemployment” since urban women face higher unemployment rates than men. Even high female employment rates in home-working manufacturing do not indicate “urban feminization”. For an analysis of structural adjustment policies and changing forms of women’s labour in Turkey see Yıldız Ecevit (1998). According to Ecevit (1998), the economic restructuring of the 1980s and the subsequent stagnation of industrial investments, high inflation as well as high unemployment rates along with patriarchal relations in the labour market led to a decrease in women’s participation in the organized labour force. As a result, women had to start working in the informal sector, in low-income, insecure jobs, such as manufacturing of unfinished goods, piecework and house-cleaning.

³⁷ See KSSGM, *Women Employment Project* retrieved December 1999 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/engpro.html>.

Despite these successes, KSSGM has not been very effective in influencing government policies and programs that normally aim to empower women merely by integrating them into socio-economic development, while leaving structured inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and class unchallenged. With a small staff and budget, KSSGM lacks both the power and the means to ensure the implementation of its policy recommendations by other government bodies. Moreover, the gender discourse articulated by KSSGM and the state homogenizes women in Turkey by ignoring differences among them, and thereby reinforcing existing social, ethnic, and religious cleavages in society. Indeed, many women's groups and associations have remained skeptical about achieving women's empowerment through KSSGM.³⁸

It is important to note, then, that although the 1990s witnessed the institutionalization of some segments of the feminist movement, most socialist and radical feminists insisted on rejecting the basic principles of male-dominated organizations, such as hierarchy, centralism and bureaucracy, and, tried to defend their autonomy from institutionalized politics. They continued to underline the necessity of autonomy for the movement if they were to avoid being co-opted.

During the 1990s, radical and social feminists gathered around the journal *Pazartesi*. First published in April 1995, *Pazartesi* had a circulation of 6000.³⁹ On the pages of *Pazartesi* Turkish feminists have continued to publicize women's oppression and expose the existing sexist norms and codes in society. Most of the articles published in feminist journals deal with the problem of domestic violence against women and sexual harassment in the workplace (see, for instance, *Pazartesi* 3, 4, 33, 36, 42, 45).

³⁸ Interview with Ayşe Düzkan, July 1, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

³⁹ Interview with Nesrin Tura, July 13, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Interviews with women who have been subjected to male violence are published frequently (see for instance *Pazartesi* 1, 10, 19). Feminists also encourage women who are exposed to domestic violence to apply to the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation for help and support. Feminists have also discussed secularism and the ban on *türban* (headscarf).⁴⁰ They have directed women's attention to the ways in which men attempt to control women's bodies and sexuality. They have, for instance, condemned sexual objectification and commodification of women in advertising in the mass media (Yeşim 1997). Both socialist and radical feminists have also criticized such forms of regulation of sexuality as honour and virginity, which oppress women.

Although there was no legal grounding, in Turkey, it was a common practice on the part of high school principals and authorities in state-run orphanages, university dormitories and hospitals to send girls, suspected of "immodest" or "indecent" behaviour, to hospitals for virginity examinations.⁴¹ In 1997, feminist groups demanded the resignation of Işıl Saygın, the minister of state responsible for woman's issues, who supported state-enforced virginity tests, which had led some young girls to commit suicide (*KA-DER Bülteni*, 1998 (5); *Pazartesi* 1998 (36): 11). This practice was banned in 1999 through an amendment which stated that the consent of women was required for virginity examinations (Parla 2001). This amendment was mostly a result of feminist campaigns which were initiated after four young girls took rat poison rather than undergoing virginity examinations.

⁴⁰ Feminists' stance on the *türban* issue will be discussed in the next section. The *türban* issue is explored in greater depth in Chapter 6.

⁴¹ Also, virginity exams were performed upon women who were suspected of illegal prostitution.

Turkish feminists view virginity, which is highly valued in Turkish society, as a way to control women's bodies and sexuality. The campaign against virginity, however, remained very limited and ineffective as it did not receive the support of majority of women in Turkey. Indeed, issues related to women's sexuality, especially women's virginity, are still very difficult to raise and discuss in the Turkish context. For feminists, those practices that seek to control and regulate women's sexuality such as virginity exams, honour killings⁴², and polygamy reinforce women's status as second-class citizens. The Turkish state has not taken any effective action to prevent these practices.

As Ayşe Parla argues:

[virginity] exams are neither embarrassing remnants of tradition nor are they simply reactionary attempts at its preservation. Rather, they are emblematic of the incorporation of the preoccupation with women's modesty, previously enforced primarily through kinship networks, into the mechanisms of surveillance deployed by the modern state. Neither throwbacks to tradition nor protections thereof, virginity examinations must be viewed as a particularly modern form of institutionalized violence used to secure the sign of the modern and/but chaste woman, fashioned by the modernization project embarked on by the Turkish nationalist elite under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk. ... [She explores] on the one hand, the interrelation of the legal and the cultural in the enforcement of gendered social norms and show, on the other hand, how the state's routinized intrusion into women's bodies comprises a fundamental facet of its sovereign claim over social relations in the name of the nation (2001: 66).

There is a tension between official laws and customary practices in Turkey. Rather than individuals with human rights, women are looked upon as property

⁴² Honour killing is a practice in which men kill female family members or relatives in the name of family "honour" for suspected sexual activity outside marriage, even when they have been victims of rape. The honour of a family is dependent on a woman's virginity, which is the property of men around her. A woman's honour is a commodity which must be guarded by a network of family and community members.

(especially in rural areas), which can easily be discarded upon the owner's choosing. Another possible contributing factor to the occurrence of honour killings is the lack of resources available to women to escape the crime, particularly in rural Turkey. With a population of 70 million people, there are only eight women's shelters in Turkey. As reported in Turkish daily *Radikal*, the limited infrastructure and lack of awareness on the part of police officers prevent the new law against violence in the family from being implemented effectively (Bilge 2004). In January 1998, partly as a result of women's groups' efforts, a law against violence in the family (*Ailenin Korunmasına Dair Kanun*) was passed (*Resmi Gazete* 1998). The new law allows for a protection order against the perpetrator of the violence. Public prosecutor can file a suit against the spouse who has committed violence, prohibit that spouse from coming home for up to six months, and prevent him or her from harassing and bothering the victim at the workplace. Although feminists view this law as an important step to protect victims of domestic violence (women and children), they also raise questions about its effectiveness since most of the time police officers prevent victims from filing suits against their spouses.⁴³ The existing legal framework has proven inadequate in dealing effectively with violence against women.

Feminists and other women's groups also campaigned to have the civil code amended. The potential membership of Turkey in the EU and the urgency to make Turkey's legislation conform with that of the EU member states have provided an opportunity space, which feminist and non-feminist women's groups exploited to campaign and press for the revision of the Civil Code. As Anil *et al.* (2002) reports, 126

⁴³ Interview with Filiz Kerestecioğlu, July 29, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

women's groups got together to voice their common demands regarding the new Civil Code. On November 22, 2001 the Turkish Parliament passed a new Civil Code, which changed women's legal status in the family, establishing full equality between spouses (*Radikal* 22 November 2001). The new Civil Code, which came into effect on January 1, 2001, replacing the former Civil Code of 1926. Under the changes, the husband is no longer the head of the family. Both men and women are given equal say in decisions regarding the marriage union and children. The new Code also stipulates a new property regime, which gives spouses equal rights over property acquired during marriage.

The new property regime has been supported by a majority of women's groups and organizations in Turkey as it recognizes that women contribute to the well being of the household through their unpaid, invisible labour. During discussions of the draft new Civil Code, however, nationalist and religious conservative members of Parliament opposed the acquired property regime, arguing that it would turn the marriage union into a corporation, increase divorce rates, and, thus, threaten the very foundations of Turkish society (*Milliyet* 1 May 2000; 16 March 2001). While nationalists and religious conservatives eventually accepted the acquired property regime as the new property regime, in part yielding to the pressure exerted by women's groups, they passed a law that stipulates that the new property regime is valid *only* for assets acquired after January 1, 2002 (*Radikal* 3 November 2001). As Demet Bilge reports in the Turkish daily *Radikal* (12 June 2003), thirty-two women's organizations formed the platform "Say No to Economic Violence against Women" and started a campaign against this last minute addition made by the conservatives. Some argued that the Civil Code was revised merely to make Turkey's legislation conform with that of the EU member states, thus speeding

Turkey's membership in the EU. As Anıl *et al.* (2002) argues, two decades of activism, lobbying and campaigning by the feminist movement played a key role in the revision of the 75-year-old Civil Code.

The feminist movement has also been successful in the revision of certain articles of the Penal Code. Starting in 2002, various feminist and women's groups and organizations, led an intensive campaign for a new, women-friendly penal code. Representatives of twenty-six groups and organizations got together and formed the "Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code". The Platform lobbied the Parliament during the period of October 2003-September 2004 and finally on September 26, 2004, the new Turkish Penal Code was accepted in the Turkish Parliament (*Radikal* 27 August 2004). The new Code includes more than thirty amendments that protect women's bodily integrity. It, for instance, criminalizes marital rape, eliminates references to patriarchal concepts like chastity, honour, morality and shame, treats sexual offences not as "crimes against society" but as "crimes against individuals", and introduces new measures to prevent sentence reductions to perpetrators of honour killings.

A proposal to again criminalize⁴⁴ adultery was inserted at the last minute in the reform package by the ruling pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) to appease its conservative supporters. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, as well as the Justice Minister Cemil Çiçek (the state minister feminists had criticized in the early 1990s), publicly defended the adultery clause as part of the government's efforts to "protect the unity of the family" and "to protect the honour and the rights of women who were cheated" (*Milliyet* 29 August 2004; *Radikal* 2 and 7 September 2004). Prime

⁴⁴ Turkey decriminalized adultery for men in 1996 and for women in 1998, arguing that the law discriminated against women.

Minister Erdoğan argued that the recent public polls conducted by his party showed that eighty percent of the Turks supported his government's decision (*Radikal* 7 September & 18 September 2004). Binnaz Toprak (2004) challenged the Prime Minister's claim, referring to a survey she and Ali Çarkoğlu conducted in 1999, which revealed that only 25 percent of the 3053 participants were in favour of criminalizing adultery. She also asked the government to reveal the detailed results of the opinion polls (including the research methods used to conduct such polls) referred to justify the government's decision to reintroduce the law on adultery. The adultery ban provoked criticism from feminists, women's rights groups, some newspaper columnists as well as from the EU officials (Acuner 2004; Şimşek 2004; Türker 2004; Women's Platform on the Turkish Penal Code 2004). Feminists warned that by criminalizing adultery, the government would create a loophole by which men would continue receiving reduced sentences for honour crimes (Acuner 2004). On September 14, 2004, feminists and women's groups organized a rally in Ankara to expose the "Violence against Women in the Turkish Penal Code". The government's decision to reintroduce the ban on adultery was covered extensively in both domestic and international media.⁴⁵ Under much domestic and international pressure, the government had to drop its plans to re-criminalize adultery (*Milliyet* 14 September 2004; *Radikal* 23 September 2004).

More recently, feminist groups campaigned (though unsuccessfully) against the constitutional amendments adopted by the Parliament. They specifically criticized the legislative measure concerning Article 10 of the Constitution, arguing that with its

⁴⁵ See for instance, *Radikal* August-September 2004; *Milliyet* August-September 2004; *Zaman* August-September 2004; bianet.org/2004/09/01; *New York Times* September 12, 2004; *Guardian* September 8, 2004; *BBC News* September 14, 2004.

emphasis on “abstract equality”, the new legislative measure would serve as a basis for rejection of any proposal for gender quotas, perpetuating discrimination against women. They called for the introduction of a “special measures” (*özel önlem*) provision, on the basis of which special policies, like positive discrimination, may be developed to eliminate gender inequalities and ensure women’s equal participation in the political process.

The efforts of the Turkish governments since the late 1990s to meet the EU guidelines (the Copenhagen criteria) to improve Turkey’s chance to becoming a full-fledged member have opened up spaces within the political process, which feminists have exploited to push for women-friendly civil and penal codes.⁴⁶ Women’s potential to participate and to have their voices heard by the state has been shaped by this context and by the way feminist and non-feminist women have framed their activism. In the 1990s, feminists and other women’s groups moved beyond the “against the state” discourse, viewing the state as more of a complex net bringing together many varied and often conflicting interests, or as a series of arenas through which women could work to battle women’s oppression and to promote change. The Turkish case reveals that during periods of transition or of restructuring, the state may become an important ally for feminists. Indeed, through their engagements with the state and their discourses, feminist and non-feminist women’s groups and organizations have been successful in translating feminist demands into real gains. The pro-Islamist government responded to women’s demands in order to enhance its legitimacy, to convince the Turkish secular establishment of party’s

⁴⁶ In an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister Erdoğan, the Women’s Platform on the Turkish Penal Code reminded the Prime Minister of the requirements of the Copenhagen Criteria, which included the establishment of full equality between men and women. See bianet.org, “AB İçin Sorumluluklarınızı Yerine Getirin” (August 26, 2004).

moderate stance, and to demonstrate to European skeptics that Turkey is a modern, democratic country, which should be included among European states.⁴⁷

Feminist activism, then, involved not only contesting existing patriarchal norms and codes in society but also pressuring the state for legal changes. Feminist groups were able to make substantial gains: a law criminalizing domestic violence, equality before the law, a new civil code and a more gender-sensitive penal code. In making their case, they strategically drew on the Kemalist gender discourse to legitimize their demands as well as their activism in the public sphere. This thesis highlights the importance of the feminist politics for the process of democratization in Turkey. The feminist movement contributes to the democratization process by exposing to public debate authoritarianisms and exclusions embedded in everyday life *and* in the current democratic framework. In other words, feminist groups contribute to the process of “double democratization” – the simultaneous democratization of the state and civil society.

3. Turkish Feminism and the Question of Difference(s)

Pointing to the institutionalization of the feminist movement in the 1990s, some might argue that feminist groups were being transformed into the kinds of interest or pressure groups found in liberal democracies. This dissertation argues that viewing feminist groups as interest groups would ignore the fact that feminists identify solidarity and identity formation as one of their main goals. Such an approach would fail to provide an account of the formation of collective identities, ideologies and solidarities, and thus pay

⁴⁷ Indeed, during a two-day summit in Brussels, the EU agreed to start membership talks with Turkey. October 3, 2005 is the start date for the entry talks. See *Milliyet* December 17, 2004; *Radikal* December 18, 2004.

insufficient attention to the symbolic and cultural components of feminist social movements. While different groups of women have struggled to improve women's citizenship rights, the question of identity has been central to feminist discourses and activism in Turkey.

Indeed, feminist struggles for empowerment have involved processes of constructing new identities. As Alberto Melucci argues (1996: 68-86), identities do not pre-exist movements but are constantly being formed within them through processes of interaction with wider social and political structures, and through processes of conflict and negotiation among a variety of different actors. The Turkish feminist movement has created what Nancy Fraser (1992: 123) called "subaltern counterpublics". Within these alternative publics, through articulating and circulating alternative discourses, Turkish feminist groups have formulated new interests and demands, have challenged the dominant cultural codes and norms in society, and have brought to public attention issues of concern to different groups of women that might otherwise have remained excluded from the homogeneous Republican public sphere, and have reconstructed new identities. As Rita Felski (1989: 167-8) observes, the feminist public sphere

constitutes a discursive arena which disseminates its arguments outward through such public channels of communication as books, journals, the mass media, and the education system. ... The feminist public sphere ... serves a dual function: *internally*, it generates a gender-specific identity grounded in a consciousness of community and solidarity among women; *externally*, it seeks to convince society as a whole of the validity of feminist claims, challenging existing structures of authority through political activity and theoretical critique.

Turkish feminists have taken a critical stance against the Kemalist project of modernity, challenging the asexual constructions and representations of the “Turkish woman” in the public sphere and sought to develop a new collective identity.

It is important to note, however, that while feminist groups have problematized the organicist, collectivist and gendered aspects of the Kemalist national identity by bringing women’s difference into the male-dominated public sphere, they have not questioned its secular and ethnic dimensions. Although they have recognized differences among women and emphasized the multiple sources of oppression, they have projected a homogeneous, essentialized identity to make public women’s oppression based on gender. Socialist feminists, for instance, argued that ignoring differences among women and accepting any essentialist and homogenizing understanding of “womanhood” undermines the possibility of feminist politics (*Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs* 1: 13). They accepted that gender difference could not be discussed in isolation from other axes of difference, such as age, religion, ethnicity and especially class. For them, an autonomous “women’s liberation movement” is only possible by organizing campaigns in which different feminist and non-feminist groups, solidarity networks and research teams come together (*ibid.* also 1988a).

Similarly, Ayşe Düzkan (1994), a prominent radical feminist, highlights the importance of campaigns in feminist organizing, arguing that due to the differences among women it would be difficult to have a comprehensive feminist policy to unite all women. According to Düzkan (1994: 162), Turkish feminists have not discussed and analyzed differences because:

Most of these women, who first started the women's movement in Turkey, who took place in it for long years, were intellectuals, leftists or ex-leftists. Socialism has that thing which gives one that false feeling of "we are all one". These women came into feminism with that feeling. But some women make little money, some make more, some are married, some are not ... some are intellectuals and some are not... these came to be realized eventually. But there was no process in which these were discussed (Düzkan 1994: 152).

While Turkish feminism has not dealt with the question of differences among women,

Düzkan argues that it is important to emphasize *common oppression* of women:

There is something else involved here; there is depoliticization. Because this means that, in the end, everybody struggles for her own liberation, for her own personal liberation. But I am a feminist because I have become aware of this fact: you can't have liberation only for one person; it is not possible to be liberated as an individual woman. For in its most crude and most cliché meaning, this is a matter of social order. Then, I should be able to come together with some people who are also being oppressed by this order so that I would be able to accomplish something. You cannot do it alone. I may have attained enough freedom for and by myself, but I cannot be liberated. Post-feminism has brought the differences to the foreground to the degree that they cannot be brought together any more. You do not look for common points; you only talk about differences. But we have our differences and common points in this life. It is an obvious fact (Düzkan 1994: 151).

Despite the recognition that there are differences among women, then, Turkish feminism has defined feminist politics in terms of the "politics of difference", in which marginalized actors struggle for recognition in the public sphere by retaining rather than shedding their identity. While advocating the politics of difference, feminists have ignored differences among women. Thus, they replaced one hegemonic representation of women (i.e. the Kemalist) with another. Such an essentialist and unitary construction of the identity "woman" enabled feminists to challenge the dominant gender discourse. At the same time, it has marginalized other women's groups that have different agendas.

In the late 1980s, this essentialist discourse within the Turkish feminist movement began to be challenged. Two major actors involved in this process are Islamist women and Kurdish feminists. As we shall see in Chapter 6, covered Islamist women became visible in the public sphere in the 1980s as active participants in Islamist movement(s). Their demands to enter the public sphere in their Islamic outfit have been viewed as a threat to Kemalism by the secular establishment (Göle 1996). Kurdish feminists have posed another challenge to the Kemalist national identity and to feminist representations of “women”. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Kurdish feminists problematized the ethnic dimension of the Kemalist nationalist discourse while at the same time criticizing Turkish feminists for privileging patriarchy over ethnicity.

Conclusion

Like their Ottoman grandmothers, the women who are active in the Turkish feminist movement of post-1980 Turkey are well-educated, intellectual women. Unlike the Ottoman female intellectuals, who were the wives or daughters of the ruling class, the majority of Turkish feminists are middle-class professional women. University students and working-class women are also active in the feminist movement. Like their Ottoman grandmothers, Turkish feminists adopted a discourse of “we as women”, exposing sexist discrimination against women. They have argued that women share common gender oppression and they should organize and wage autonomous struggles on all fronts for their liberation. Like their grandmothers, by adopting a homogenizing “we women” discourse, however, Turkish feminist groups have spoken for *all* women in Turkey,

ignoring differences among women. This is probably one of the reasons why the feminist movement has been perceived as an elitist movement, failing to develop a mass base.

While the Ottoman female intelligentsia raised and debated women's issues within the framework of competing political currents (Westernism, Islamism and Turkism) of the period, feminists in post-1980 Turkey have insisted on the autonomy of the movement, rejecting to incorporate their struggles into other social and political movements and refusing to subordinate women's needs to the needs and interests of any other struggle. Indeed, one of the most important characteristics of the Turkish feminist movement has been its *autonomy* from the left and the Turkish state. With the institutionalization of some segments of the feminist movement in the 1990s, however, Turkish feminist politics started to shift toward a "politics of presence". Yet, the majority of the Turkish feminists groups still emphasize the importance of autonomy.

More importantly, while Turkish feminists drew strategically on Kemalism, exploiting and politicizing the contradictions of its gender discourse, they challenged the homogenizing and organicist discourse of Kemalist nationalism, by bringing women's differences into the public sphere. They refused to be viewed as the "emancipated symbols" of the Republic and "guardians and transmitters of Turkish culture". In fact, they have exposed and contested the sexist cultural codes and standards of morality in Turkey. By demanding recognition for the repressed side of their identity, that is female sexuality, feminists have challenged the Kemalist female image of "emancipated and educated asexual professional women" in the public sphere who would perform their duties in the private sphere as mothers and wives without questioning sexist codes and norms. By exposing those practices that control women's bodies and sexuality such as

virginity exams, domestic violence, and honour killings, Turkish feminists subverted the dominant Kemalist discourse on women, demanding full control over their bodies and sexuality. They argued that women's oppression in the private sphere and sexist codes and norms rendered equality in the public sphere meaningless.

The Turkish feminist movement, then, has served as a site where women contested, subverted and sought to transform the Kemalist project of modernity, bringing into public attention long denied identities and hidden inequalities. Since the 1980s, the feminist movement has carved out its place in Turkish politics, rejecting the identities and roles assigned to women by different social and political projects. Feminist struggles in Turkey, then, have also been struggles for redefining their identities. In other words, women are struggling not only for a "freedom to *act* but for the freedom to *be*" (Melucci 1996: 135, italics mine).

**CHAPTER V: FROM DIFFERENCE TO DIFFERENCES: KURDISH
FEMINISM AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF FEMINIST
ACTIVISM AND DISCOURSES IN THE LATE 1980s and 1990s**

... [U]niversality of gender oppression is problematic, based as it is on the assumption that the categories of race and class have to be invisible for gender to be visible.

(Mohanty 1992: 75)

Most studies of women in Turkey focus either on secular feminist or women's groups or Islamist women, ignoring ethnic heterogeneity. To date, there has been no systematic attempt to study the discourses and activism of Kurdish feminist or women's groups in Turkey (and women of non-Muslim ethnic minorities for that matter).¹ This dissertation attempts to rectify this by analyzing discourses and activism of Kurdish feminist groups in İstanbul throughout the 1990s. It focuses on the challenges Kurdish feminists posed simultaneously to the Kurdish national movement, Kemalist state feminism and the Turkish feminist movement. Kurdish feminists share with Turkish feminists a critique of Kemalist state feminism. Yet, they also criticize Turkish feminists for adopting a homogenizing discourse, ignoring ethnic differences among women. Kurdish feminists also expose the gendered nature of the Kurdish national discourse, criticizing Kurdish nationalists for imposing identities and missions on Kurdish women.

The argument is based mainly on the analysis of interviews conducted with Kurdish feminists, supplemented by an analysis of two Kurdish feminist journals

¹ A few exceptions include Yalçın-Heckmann's chapter (1995) on women's roles in the nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish tribes in Turkey; Yalçın-Heckmann and Van Gelder's article (1999) on the "shifting images" of Kurdish women in the Kurdish nationalist discourse; Açıık's chapter (2002) on the contradictions between the male-dominated Kurdish national movement and Kurdish women's movement.

published during the 1990s: *Roza* and *Jujin*.² *Roza*, the first journal by Kurdish feminists in Turkey, was published between March 1996 and May 2000.³ In 1998 a group of women left *Roza* and gathered around a new journal called *Jujin*. It was published between December 1996 and March 2000. They both had an estimated circulation of 1000-1500. Besides İstanbul these journals were distributed and sold in mostly Kurdish-populated southeastern region of Turkey. They were also sold in Europe where many Kurdish immigrants live.⁴

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an introduction to “the Kurdish question” in Turkey. The second section examines the ways in which Kurdish women are constructed within Kurdish nationalist discourses and the criticisms raised by Kurdish feminists. The third section analyzes the activism and discourses of Kurdish feminists and the challenges they posed to the Turkish feminist movement. Kurdish feminists highlight the gender bias of Turkish feminism. They struggle not only to transform the unequal relations between men and women in Kurdish society but also to gain greater freedom for the Kurds.

² *Jin û Jiyan* is published by Jiyan Kurdish Women’s Group. It began publication in 1998. While there are feminists in its ranks, Jiyan Women’s Group as a whole does not claim to be feminist. The group defines the oppression of Kurdish women in terms of their national, class and gender identities. Also, rather than targeting Turkish feminists, this group criticizes the Turkish state and challenges the male-dominated Kurdish national movement. Interview with Jiyan Kurdish women’s group, August 7, 1999, İstanbul. I refer to some articles published in this journal for comparative purposes.

³ These journals are published in Turkish. The choice of Turkish language shows that these journals are directed at public in Turkey. Some contributors write anonymously, some under pseudonyms.

⁴ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

1. Challenges to the Ethnic Identity of the Republic: the Rise of Kurdish Nationalism

This section provides a brief introduction to “the Kurdish question” and to the rise of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey.⁵ The Kurdish question has been central to the debates about nationalism and democracy in Turkey. Since the 1980s, Kurdish nationalism has posed a direct challenge to Turkish nationalism’s⁶ claim that Turkey is a homogeneous nation-state. It has defied the official ideology, revealing that the imagined community of the Turks, conceived as unified and homogeneous, was in fact heterogeneous. Thus, Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish claims to cultural rights were viewed as threats to “the unitary character of the Turkish state” and “the indivisibility of the state with its territory and nation”.⁷

As we saw in Chapter 3, with the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the Kemalist elite had sought to transcend existing particularistic loyalties and affiliations within the new political framework of the nation-state. The Kemalist nation-building

⁵ The Kurdish national movement in Turkey is understood as the activities and efforts of political parties, organizations, groups and individuals to make public the Kurdish issue and to construct and assert a Kurdish ethnic identity/difference – which is distinct from Turkish identity – and to make demands on the basis of that identity. For detailed discussions of the “Kurdish question” and the rise and development of the Kurdish national movement in Turkey, see Olson (1996); Kirişçi and Winrow (1997); Gunter (1990, 1997); Barkey and Fuller (1998); Yeğen (1999a); Ergil (2000); Yavuz (1998, 2001), and Hirschler (2001).

⁶ Turkish nationalism is neither a static nor a homogenous discourse. It is possible to view it as a “series of discourses and a vast lexis”. Tanıl Bora identifies four main nationalist discourses in Turkey: the official Kemalist nationalism, which is “the root language of Turkish nationalism”; “left-wing Kemalist nationalism”, one of the dialects of this root language; “liberal neonationalism”, the pro-Western dialect; “Turkish radical nationalism”, the racist-ethnicist dialect of the Kemalist root-language (2003: 436).

⁷ These principles are enshrined in several articles of the Turkish Constitution. Thus, any activities by citizens, civic or political associations, and political parties aiming at endangering “the indivisibility of the state with its territory and nation” (*devletin vatanı ve milleti ile bölünmez bütünlüğü*) would be viewed as violating the Constitution.

project imposed uniformity over a population divided along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines, in order to create a homogeneous national community within the “indivisible Republic”.⁸ The creation of the modern Turkish nation-state thus involved the subordination of particular identities and the privileging of a particular identity (i.e. Turkish).⁹ Following the practice of the Ottomans, after the establishment of the Republic, with the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, only the non-Muslim *millet*s (i.e. Armenians, Greeks, and Jews) were recognized as *religious* minorities and granted minority rights by the new Republic. The Kurds, Circassians, Laz, Pomaks and other Muslim groups – irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic backgrounds – were considered members of the Turkish nation, with full citizenship rights.¹⁰ Accordingly, it was argued

⁸ As a part of the policy to standardize and impose Turkish as the sole official language within the Republic, the state introduced laws that prohibited the use of the Kurdish language and banned Kurdish language education.

⁹ As noted in Chapter 3, Kemalist nationalism, which drew on the formulation of Ziya Gökalp, himself an ethnic Kurd from Diyarbakır, is inclusive in the sense that if someone says s/he belongs to the Turkish nation, then that person is considered to be a Turk. This understanding is well-expressed in one of Atatürk’s well-known phrases “How happy is s/he who can say ‘I am a Turk’” (*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene*). In 1995, Prime Minister Tansu Çiller in a speech declared “How happy is s/he who can say ‘I am a citizen of Turkey’”, emphasizing the importance of territorial citizenship and downplaying the reference to the designation “Türk” which came to be associated with a particular ethnicity. Anyone who was a citizen of Turkey was a member of the Turkish nation regardless of ethnicity, language or belief. Since the late 1990s, it is becoming increasingly common in big cities like İstanbul to hear people referring to themselves as *Türkiyeli* (someone from Turkey, citizen of Turkey) rather than *Türk* (Turkish).

¹⁰ The Sèvres Treaty, which was signed between the allies and the Ottoman Empire in 1920, included provisions for local autonomy for some Kurdish areas and even the possibility of an independent Kurdish state. This treaty was neither ratified by the signatories nor were its terms recognized by the nationalist resistance movement led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) in Anatolia – which was supported by a group of Kurdish tribal leaders and sheikhs. For a detailed account of the origins of the Kurdish question in Turkey see Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, especially chapter 3.

that there was no need for granting the Kurds (religious or ethnic) minority rights as they were members of the majority nation in Turkey.¹¹

Thus, until the early 1990s, the Turkish state denied the existence of a distinct Kurdish identity in Turkey. The state did not recognize “the *Kurdishness* of the Kurdish question” (Yeğen 1999b: 555), framing it “as a question of political reaction, banditry, tribal resistance and regional backwardness” (*ibid.*: 566). In the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, most state officials continued to insist that there was no “Kurdish problem” or problem of ethnicity, but only a problem of terrorism, one that required a military rather than a political solution. By the late 1980s, however, a few leading politicians began publicly to refer to the Kurdish issue. For instance, in 1989, President Turgut Özal announced that he was of Kurdish origin. In 1992, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel recognized the existence of “the Kurdish reality” in Turkey.

While the Turkish state long denied the existence of Kurds as such, individuals of Kurdish origin were able to participate in the Turkish political life. They served as members of the parliament, cabinet ministers, mayors, and as state prosecutors. Many prominent politicians in Turkey are, in fact, of Kurdish origin. In addition to Turgut Özal, former Prime Minister and President, these include Hikmet Çetin, a former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister and Kamran İnan, a former cabinet minister (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 144, 147). Since the foundation of the Republic, at least one quarter of deputies elected to the Parliament has been of Kurdish ethnic origin (Ergil 2000: 126). Yet, Kurds were able to reach high office in Turkey only by leaving their Kurdish

¹¹ Also, the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory opened the way to the development of arguments such as “Kurds were Turks” who spoke Kurmancı and Zaza or “Kurds were mountain Turks” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 102-103).

identity in the private sphere. Those Kurds who politicized their ethnic identity were punished by the state. For instance, in 1981, a former cabinet minister, Şerafettin Elçi, was sentenced to two years imprisonment for having declared in the Parliament in 1979 that he was a Kurd.

It is estimated that 12 million Kurds live in Turkey, making up the 18 percent of the population. In 1990 about two thirds of Kurds lived in southeastern provinces, which are among the poorest and least developed in Turkey. Due to massive migration out of the Kurdish-populated southeastern region into urban centers throughout the 1990s (voluntary and forced – by both the PKK and the Turkish armed forces), it is estimated that the majority of the Kurds now live outside southeastern Turkey (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 135). In fact, as a result of this migration “the largest Kurdish city in the world is, in effect, Istanbul, the major business center of the world” (*ibid.*: 26).¹²

Moreover, there are differences among Kurds too. The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, but some adhere to the Alevi faith – a branch of Shia Islam mixed with pre-Islamic features.¹³ Kurds are also divided along tribal and linguistic lines. While *Kurmançî*, the most dominant dialect, is spoken by most Sunni Kurds, *Zaza* is spoken mostly by the Alevi Kurds. These divisions made it more difficult for the Kurds to push their claims in the past.

¹² It is estimated that Kurds constitute nearly 2.5 million of İstanbul’s 12 million inhabitants (Ergil 2000: 125).

¹³ The Alevi have long been staunch supporters of Republican secularism as it provides protection for heterodox sects from the dominance of the Sunni majority. Since the 1980s there has been a vivid debate on the definition of Alevism in Turkey. While some point to its Turkish roots, Kurdish nationalists emphasize the Kurdishness of Alevism (Hirschler 2001: 157-158). The Turkish state supports the development of a distinct *ethnic* Alevi identity in order to prevent Kurdish-speaking Alevi from self-identifying as Kurds and, thus, from supporting Kurdish nationalism (Van Bruinessen 1996; Hirschler 2001).

The large Kurdish population of the southeast had posed a problem for the new Republic. Kurds had launched three major rebellions against the Kemalist regime, challenging its two main pillars: *secularism* and *nationalism*. The rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mount Ağrı (1930) and Dersim (now Tunceli) (1937-38) were suppressed by the Turkish state, which described them as reactionary *religious* revolts against the secular reforms introduced by the Kemalists.¹⁴ The Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 in eastern Anatolia was neither a purely nationalist uprising nor simply a religious and tribal revolt, however (Van Bruinessen 1992: 298-299, 1995: 167-168; Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 103-105).¹⁵ Even though it was initially religious in nature and aimed at restoring the Caliphate, its main aim was to establish an independent Kurdish state, where religious principles were to be upheld (Toprak 1981: 68; also see Van Bruinessen 1992: 265). The Sheikh Said rebellion was supported by several Sunni Kurdish tribes but not by Alevi Kurds (Van Bruinessen 1992: 293-294; 1995: 155). While the Kemalists saw the rebellion as separatist, they focused publicly on its religious nature, using it to justify

¹⁴ Ad hoc courts, called Independence Tribunals (*İstiklâl Mahkemeleri*), were set up to try the leaders of these rebellions; most of them were sentenced to death (Lewis 1968: 266). For Kurdish rebellions see Van Bruinessen (1992: chapter 5; 1995: 123-171); Tunçay (1981: 127-136, 173-175, 241-243); Olson (1989); Kirişçi and Winrow (1997: 100-106).

¹⁵ There is some debate on the nature of this rebellion. Some scholars like Robert Olson (1989) and Mete Tunçay (1981: 129) argue that it was a nationalist revolt. Olson, in fact, argues that the origins of Kurdish nationalism could be found in a revolt led by a sheikh in 1870 against the Ottoman Empire with the aim of establishing an independent Kurdish state. Others like Van Bruinessen (1992: 298-299) and Kirişçi and Winrow (1997: 83-84) argue that these revolts were mainly religious and tribal revolts (also see Lewis 1968: 409-410). Kirişçi and Winrow disagree with Olson, arguing that there was a lack of ethnic or national consciousness among the Kurds in the late nineteenth century (1997: 83-84). Ergil argues that the revolt was a reaction to the centralizing reforms of the Kemalists by local Kurdish notables who viewed the new republican regime as a threat to the survival of autonomous tribal structures (2000: 124).

their secularist reforms, such as the ban on religious orders and the clothing law¹⁶, which immediately followed the suppression of the rebellion (Toprak 1981: 68).

Similarly, the rebellion of Mount Ağrı in 1930 was a reaction to the modernizing and secularizing reforms of the Kemalists, which aimed to destroy the Islamic social and political order (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 101).¹⁷ Some, however, argue that both Mount Ağrı revolt and the Dersim revolt of 1937-1938 were “Kurdish in nature and aspiration” (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 11). Yet, most of these rebellions lacked the support of the majority of the Kurds. While the Alevi Kurds sided with the state against the Sunni Kurds during the Sheikh Said rebellion, the Sunni Kurds did not support the Alevi Kurds during the Dersim revolt (*ibid.*: 69). In other words, tribal rivalries and religious differences among the Kurds prevented the emergence of a unified Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey and by the late 1930s the Turkish state consolidated its rule over Kurdish-populated provinces (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 105). In the 1950 elections, which initiated the transition from a single-party to a multi-party era, the Kurdish tribal leaders (*ağa*), whose local interests were recognized by the ruling elite, were “co-opted into the Turkish political system” (*ibid.*). Yet, the early Kurdish rebellions – which were viewed as a major threat to the integrity of the state – shaped the way the Turkish state framed the Kurdish issue.

With the introduction of the 1961 Constitution, the Kurdish struggle for recognition took a new turn. The freedoms and protections granted by the new

¹⁶ The clothing law of 1925 outlawed the *fez* and made hats compulsory for men.

¹⁷ After this revolt, the state deported the Kurds from the region to western Turkey.

Constitution opened the way to leftist activism among the Turks and the Kurds.¹⁸ Initially there was solidarity between them in their fight against capitalism and imperialism. A main demand on the agenda of the leftist Kurds was the socioeconomic restructuring of the eastern and southeastern Anatolia to eliminate tribal social structures and hierarchies. Indeed, in the late 1960s, the problems in eastern Turkey were characterized by both the state and the leftist groups as a problem of underdevelopment (leftists) and “regional backwardness” (the state).¹⁹ The Turkish Workers’ Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi – TİP*), which was closed down in 1971 by the military, was the first legal party to discuss the Kurdish problem as an ethnic problem at its party congress in 1970 (Gunter 1990: 16; Van Bruinessen 1995: 342). In the late 1960s and early 1970s many Kurds were involved in leftist groups as it was illegal to establish explicitly Kurdish organizations (Gunter 1990: 17). Indeed, some of the most radical Turkish leftist groups were led by Kurds such as Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Cayan. Gunter argued that “although they spoke of ‘a Kurdish people’ and virtually incited the Kurds in eastern Turkey to secede, Gezmiş and Cayan were clearly Marxist radicals before being Kurdish nationalists” (*ibid.*).

By the mid-1970s, the Kurdish left started to form separate student organizations and cultural and political groups, some of which emphasized Kurdish ethnicity. Initially, these groups and organizations aimed to push the state to recognize Kurdish cultural rights. Some later adopted a more radical position demanding the establishment of an

¹⁸ As a result of the steady migration from rural areas to big cities in western Turkey, for mainly economic reasons, many Kurds had the opportunity to study. In the late 1960s and 1970s, some of these urbanized and educated Kurds became politicized.

¹⁹ For the state discourse of “regional backwardness” see Yeğen (1999a: 159-169).

independent Kurdistan.²⁰ The PKK (*Partia Karkaren Kürdistan* – Kurdistan Workers’ Party) was established in 1978 under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan as a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish political party, advocating the creation of a Marxist-Leninist Kurdish state.²¹ The PKK, like other left-wing Kurdish organizations, viewed the tribal nature of Kurdish society as the main target of the revolutionary struggle. It called for the elimination of feudalism, tribalism and religious factionalism in Kurdish society (Gunter 1990: 60). In the 1990s, the PKK began to emphasize Kurdish nationalism, toning down its Marxist rhetoric, with the aim of attracting more support from the Kurds.²² As tribalism and Kurdish nationalism often clashed, Turkish authorities were able to secure the loyalty of some tribal leaders, who “oppos[ed] Kurdish nationalism out of concern that their traditional ways of life could be threatened” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 25). The PKK viewed these tribal leaders, politicians of Kurdish origin and members of rival organizations as “collaborators” (Van Bruinessen 1992: 33).

With the military intervention of 1980, Öcalan and other PKK leaders fled to Syria. As a reaction against the left-right divisions within society and expressions of a distinct Kurdish identity, the new Constitution of 1982 emphasized the independence of the nation and the indivisibility of the Republic. One of the articles stated that “no language prohibited by the state shall be used in the expression and dissemination of thought” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 111). Law 2932 of 1983 further advanced this

²⁰ For more on these groups and their varied demands see Van Bruinessen (1995: 346-352.)

²¹ For more on the PKK, see Barkey and Fuller (1998: 21-60) and Gunter (1997: 23-57).

²² The PKK also changed its position on religion. While it had been highly critical of religion since its foundation, it gradually adopted a more moderate position on Islam (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 25). The conservative nature of many Kurds and the impressive performance of the pro-Islamist Welfare Party in southeastern provinces in the local elections of 1994 may explain why the PKK appealed to Islam as a propaganda tool.

constitutional article by declaring Turkish as the mother tongue of Turkish citizens, banning the use of any other language (Gunter 1997: 10).²³ Also, by adopting the policy of “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” (*Türk-İslam sentezi*), the military aimed to construct solidarity around Turkish nationalism and Islam and, thus, hoped to curb leftist and separatist Kurdish activism and ideas. Yet, policies of the military and subsequent democratically-elected governments in southeast Turkey helped enhance “Kurdish national consciousness than the propaganda work of the PKK” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 112). Indeed, the policies of the state led to further politicization of the Kurdish ethnic identity. As Hirschler noted, “the general trend of identity in Kurdish society has thereby been a move from one with strong religious components in the 1920s-30s, to one with strong class components in the 1960s-70s, to one with ethnicity as the core layer in the 1990s” (2001: 146).

In 1984 the PKK launched an armed uprising against the Turkish state to establish an independent Kurdistan. Its terrorist activities were directed against economic, military and civilian targets in Turkey. The PKK raided villages to secure the support of villagers. It also killed teachers and burned down schools, arguing that the Turkish state “was using its national education system to assimilate the Kurds” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 128). The PKK killed not only nationalist Turks but also moderate Kurds who were seen as pro-Turkish state. The state responded by imposing emergency rule (OHAL) in 1987,

²³ This law was repealed in April 1991 by then President Özal (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 64). Yet, the use of Kurdish for political or educational purposes was still not allowed. In 1992, Özal suggested that allowing broadcasting and education in Kurdish could help the state to deal with the Kurdish question more effectively (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 137).

which empowered regional governors and village guards²⁴ (*köy korucuları*), and suspended the civil rights of citizens in predominantly Kurdish-populated provinces. In 1991, the Anti-Terror Law (*Terörle Mücadele Kanunu*) was introduced. Terrorism was defined as acts involving “repression, violence and force, or the threat to use force, by one or several persons belonging to an organization with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Turkish Republic including its political, legal, social, secular and economic system” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 128-129). Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law banned any propaganda, written and verbal, demonstrations, or other acts which threatened the unity of Turkey, regardless of the methods, intentions, and ideas behind such activities. This article practically prohibited the dissemination of any ideas on the Kurdish issue. Many journalists, human right activists, lawyers, and intellectuals were tried before the State Security Courts (*Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri – DGMs*)²⁵ for crimes such as “disseminating separatist propaganda”, “threatening the indivisible unity of the state” and “for aiding and abetting terrorism”.²⁶

²⁴ Through the village guard system the state armed and paid thousands of civilian, pro-state Kurdish villagers to fight the PKK (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 71-72, 147-148).

²⁵ Consisting of panel of five members – one military and two civilian judges and two prosecutors – the DGMs had jurisdiction over civilian cases involving the Anti-Terror Act (Gunter 1997: 14). They were abolished in May 2004 as a part of the recent reforms made into the 1982 Constitution.

²⁶ In 1995, Yaşar Kemal, one of Turkey’s most prominent writers (of Kurdish origin), was charged and tried for publishing an article criticizing the Turkish state for its stance on the Kurdish question. He was given a suspended sentence by the DGM.

In the 1990s pro-Kurdish political parties²⁷ were also closed down by the Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) for their alleged connections with the PKK and for other 'activities endangering the state (for details see Watts 1999).²⁸ The suppression of moderate Kurdish groups and the banning of pro-Kurdish parties operating within the existing Turkish political system "played into the hands of the PKK by exposing the 'futility' of moderate behavior" (Barkey and Fuller 1998: 45; Ergil 2000: 127). Indeed, the state's resistance to any explicit expression of Kurdish difference further politicized Kurdish ethnic identity. As Watts argued, while there was consistent state rejection of Kurdish identity, the existence of the pro-Kurdish political parties in the Turkish political arena, the help provided to Kurdish deputies by key members of the Parliament, along with President Özal's moderate stance on the Kurdish issue reveal that

²⁷ HEP (*Halkın Emek Partisi* – People's Labour Party) was established in June 1990 as the first legal pro-Kurdish political party. It formed an electoral alliance with the center-left SHP (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti* – Social Democratic Populist Party). 22 HEP candidates were elected in the 1991 elections. During the swearing-in ceremony a newly elected female member, Leyla Zana, added a Kurdish phrase into her oath and wore a headband displaying colours associated with the PKK, which led to her expulsion from the SHP (Ergil 2000: 129). Another new deputy, Sırrı Sakık, was the brother of a PKK commander. When HEP was banned in 1993, these deputies established DEP (*Demokrasi Partisi*–Democracy Party). When the Constitutional Court closed down DEP in 1994, the parliamentary immunities of 13 DEP deputies were lifted; seven of these deputies and an independent pro-Kurdish deputy were arrested and sentenced to prison terms while the rest fled abroad. HADEP (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* – People's Democracy Party), founded in July 1994, followed a more moderate line, advocating a political solution to the Kurdish question. At the second Congress of HADEP in 1996, however, the Turkish flag was torn down and replaced by a portrait of Öcalan. A few HADEP deputies were arrested, including Murat Bozlak, party's general secretary. HADEP was closed down in March 2003 for "aiding and abetting the PKK" and "engaging in activities against the indivisible unity of the state" (*Milliyet* 14 March 2003; *Radikal* 19 July 2003). A legal action was also initiated against another pro-Kurdish party DEHAP (*Demokratik Halk Partisi* – Democratic People's Party) for committing "forgery" by "falsifying documents" in order to contest in the November 2002 general elections (*ibid.*).

²⁸ In Turkey, the establishment of political parties based only on ethnicity or religion is not permitted.

a complex and subtle struggle is occurring within the Turkish political establishment over how to treat Kurdish identity politics ... The existence of such a struggle suggests not only that the Turkish state is less monolithic than has been assumed, but also that a more intimate association between pro-Kurdish and mainstream Turkish actors has existed than either Turkish or Kurdish nationalist discourse would have us believe" (1999: 632).

In the mid-1990s the Turkish state responded to the PKK with its own military counteroffensive to weaken the influence of the PKK in southeastern Turkey and to destroy the PKK bases in northern Iraq. By late 1995, the activities of the PKK in the southeastern region diminished (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 128). The violent armed conflict between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK in southeastern Turkey left more than 30,000 dead. State security forces evacuated more than 2250 villages (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 131), suspected of helping the PKK or supporting Kurdish separatism. This involved the relocation of about two million people²⁹ to large cities (Ergil 2000: 128) for security reasons. The Turkish military threatened Syria with war unless it expelled Öcalan and the PKK. When Syria expelled Öcalan, the Turkish National Intelligence Service (MİT), with help of the CIA, captured him in Nairobi, Kenya in February 1999. After Öcalan's capture and trial, the conflict in southeastern Turkey ceased.³⁰ In late 1999, the PKK declared its withdrawal from Turkey.³¹ Currently, re-

²⁹ The scale of voluntary and/or forced migration from Kurdish-populated areas to urban centers in southeastern and western Turkey since the early 1990s remains disputed. For details see Kirişçi and Winrow (1997: 134-135).

³⁰ Öcalan was found guilty for treason and sentenced to death in June 1999 after a one-month trial by the State Security Court.

³¹ After his capture Öcalan ordered the PKK to end the armed struggle and withdraw from Turkey. He declared that he "loved Turkey and the Turkish people" and fighting for an independent Kurdish state was wrong and he would work with the Turkish state to achieve peace.

established under a different name (KADEK – Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress), the PKK is trying to gain recognition as a non-violent political movement.³²

The terrorist activities of the PKK, while bringing the Kurdish issue onto the Turkish (as well as regional and international) political agenda, also made it difficult for Turkish officials and some segments of the population to separate the Kurdish issue from the problem of PKK terrorism.³³ Since 1995, however, the Kurdish question has been debated relatively publicly and freely in the media and through several meetings and conferences (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 149-151). In October 1995, the Turkish Parliament revised the Article 8 of the Anti-Terror law, providing a clearer definition of “separatist propaganda”.³⁴ The amendment provided a relatively relaxed environment within which the Kurdish issue could be discussed. An increasing number of intellectuals, politicians and some journalists have called for democratization and pointed to the need for greater freedom of expression. The rise of Kurdish nationalism led some to advocate a more inclusive notion of national identity. The existence of pro-Kurdish political parties within the Turkish political arena also encouraged debates within the Parliament, in the

³² PKK/KADEK aims to be recognized not only by the international community and the Turkish state but also by other Kurdish groups and organizations as the sole representative of the Kurdish people. The PKK, while including different factions, has been a non-democratic organization and has been known for its intolerance towards other Kurdish groups and organizations that did not approve its use of violence and leadership style. Moderate Kurdish nationalists like Kemal Burkay often criticized the PKK for its methods and interfering in the internal affairs of other Kurdish groups and organizations (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 214). Others criticized the PKK for hindering the development of a dialogue with the Turkish government due to its violent actions.

³³ The PKK’s terrorist activities also led to the popularization and radicalization of Turkish nationalism.

³⁴ Following the revision of Article 8, in December 1995 the European Parliament ratified the customs union treaty between Turkey and the EU.

media and in society “concerning the place of democracy and national identity in the ideology of the modern Turkish state” (Watts 1999: 650).

Political discourse on the Kurdish issue in Turkey thus began to change in the late 1990s. The capture of Öcalan, the withdrawal of the PKK from Turkey and the desire and the possibility of being a part of the EU also opened up the possibility for state officials to separate the Kurdish issue from terrorism.³⁵ Indeed, the Turkish Parliament recently recognized the cultural rights of the Kurds. The Parliament passed a series of reform packages known as “harmonization laws” (*uyum yasaları*) in 2002 to meet the EU guidelines (the Copenhagen criteria), lifting the ban on Kurdish-language broadcasting and publishing and allowing Kurdish-language education.³⁶ In fact, the state television channel TRT recently aired its first Kurdish-language news (*Radikal* June 10, 2004; Dündar 2004).³⁷ Thus, the Turkish state has recognized the linguistic and cultural difference of the Kurds, allowing them to express their cultural identity.³⁸ Since 2003, the

³⁵ At the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, the EU announced that Turkey was an official candidate for full EU membership (*Milliyet* 11, 12 December 1999). At the Copenhagen Summit in December 2002, the EU member states declared that accession talks with Turkey would start after the EU Summit in December 2004 if Turkey were to fulfill “the Copenhagen criteria” for membership. The Copenhagen political criteria require implementation of democracy and the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights and minority rights. During the Brussels Summit of December 2004, the EU agreed to start membership talks with Turkey. October 3, 2005 is the start date for the entry talks (*Milliyet* December 17, 2004; *Radikal* December 18, 2004).

³⁶ The Parliament also abolished the death penalty, replacing it with life imprisonment in August 2002 (*Radikal* 3 August 2002; *New York Times* 4 August 2002). Capital punishment would be used only in war or during the threat of war. Nationalist right-wing MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – Nationalist Action Party), one of the partners in the ruling coalition government at the time, resisted the changes arguing that the reforms were being introduced to save Öcalan.

³⁷ Today, there are a large number of Kurdish newspapers and magazines as well as 28 Kurdish radio stations and five Kurdish television stations in Turkey (Yavuz 2001: 19).

³⁸ The Turkish state did not recognize the Kurds as an ethnic minority group. Those who opposed to the recognition of Kurds as a minority believe that this would open the door to

AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party) government has continued to introduce to the Parliament a series of “harmonization law packages” to meet the political criteria for accession to the EU. In July 2003, Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law was repealed by the Sixth Harmonization Law (*Radikal* 19 July 2003). The DGMs were also abolished in May 2004 as a part of the constitutional reform package (*Anayasa Değişikliği Paketi*) (*Milliyet* 28 April 2004; *Radikal* 7 May 2004). In June 2004, Leyla Zana and three other former Kurdish members of Parliament were released from prison (*Milliyet* 9, 10 June 2004; *Radikal* 10 June 2004).³⁹

Many among Turkish officials and the Turkish public fear that the recognition of the Kurdish linguistic and cultural identity/difference might lead some Kurds to push for a territorial autonomy or federalism, which would be a first step toward the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. Yet, as the Kurds are geographically dispersed within Turkey, it might be difficult to view territorial form of autonomy or federalism as viable options (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 62).⁴⁰ Moreover, Kurds are also internally divided along tribal, religious and linguistic lines. Some Kurds perceive themselves as Turks, while others as both Kurd and Turk, and still others as Kurds, i.e. as a *separate* ethnic group.⁴¹ While most Kurds in Turkey have demanded cultural and linguistic rights to

similar ethnicity-based demands and identity-specific representation as Turkish society is not homogeneous (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997: 45, 212-213).

³⁹ As a result of a new retrial law introduced by the Second Harmonization Law of February 2003, the four former DEP deputies Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Doğan and Selim Sadak were being retried since March 2003 (*Milliyet* 10 June 2004).

⁴⁰ For possible solutions to the Kurdish question see Kirişçi and Winrow (1997); Barkey and Fuller (1998). For Kirişçi and Winrow, a policy of multiculturalism offers better prospects for a long-term and peaceful solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey.

⁴¹ For instance, in the April 1999 elections HADEP received only 4.8 percent of the vote, far below the 10 percent national threshold required to enter the Parliament. It won the control of 36 municipalities out of 540 in eastern and southeastern Turkey in the 1999

protect their identity, a small group of Kurds continues to advocate secession.⁴² It remains to be seen what impact an autonomous Kurdish regional government of northern Iraq within a unitary post-Saddam Iraq will have on the Kurds in Turkey.⁴³ The recognition of cultural rights of the Kurds might help Turkish authorities to initiate a dialogue with moderate Kurdish political groups, which, in turn, would help to create an atmosphere of trust and tolerance between them. This is also tied in with move towards further democratization within Turkey.

To conclude, the Kurds do not constitute a monolithic entity as tribal, linguistic, and religious differences prevented the emergence of a unified Kurdish identity. As we shall see, Kurds are divided not only in terms of linguistic, tribal, religious, regional and political affiliations, but also along gender lines. Moreover, just as the Kurdish community is internally diverse, so too Kurdish women do not constitute a homogeneous group. There are differences among Kurdish women based on language, tribe, religion, class, region, and political orientation. Also, some women of Kurdish ethnic origin

local elections, including major southeastern cities like Diyarbakır and Mardin, while faring poorly in cities like İstanbul, Ankara, Adana, İzmir and Mersin where large numbers of Kurds reside (Ergil 2000: 129). As between one-quarter and one-third of the Kurds voted for HADEP (Ayata and Ayata 2002: 140), ethnic identity does not seem to be the only identity affecting the party preference of the Kurds. For details on ethnic and regional voting and electoral performance of pro-Kurdish parties, see Bozarslan (1996); Ayata and Ayata (2002).

⁴² Recently, Neşe Düzel, a journalist of the daily *Radikal*, conducted series of interviews with Şerafettin Elçi, a former cabinet minister of Kurdish ethnic background, on the Kurdish question and recent developments in Iraq. Elçi believes that the Kurdish problem in Turkey could be solved only within a federal system where both Turkish and Kurdish would be recognized as official languages. He also believes that in the future, following the establishment of a federal system in Turkey – if Kurds would decide to form their independent state, they would secede (see *Radikal* 14 June 2004; 14 February 2005).

⁴³ For the international dimension of the Kurdish question and how it shaped Turkish foreign policy see Barkey (1996); Robins (1996); Kirişçi and Winrow (1997: chapter 6); Barkey and Fuller (1998: chapter 6).

consider themselves as Turkish.⁴⁴ Other Kurdish women, while regarding themselves as Kurdish, challenge Kurdish nationalist discourses. These women have become the dissenting members of the Kurdish national movement. The next section focuses on the challenges posed to Kurdish nationalist discourses by Kurdish feminists in the 1990s.

2. Kurdish Feminist Challenges to the Kurdish National Movement

While the Kurdish national movement, like other nationalist movements, presents itself, and is perceived by the Turkish state, as a unified front, it is not monolithic. While the Kurdish nation is still in the process of “becoming” and Kurdish nationalist discourses are still in the process of formation, Kurdish nationalists have adopted a gendered discourse, albeit varied, for political and social mobilization. Kurdish feminists in İstanbul have exposed the gendered nature of Kurdish nationalist discourses and have challenged the identities, roles and missions imposed on Kurdish women by Kurdish nationalist men.

Kurdish feminist Fatma Kayhan argues that Kurdish nationalism is similar to Kemalist nationalism in that it encourages women both to be *mothers*, giving birth and raising the members of the nation, and *active militants* in the national struggle fighting alongside men.⁴⁵ Women’s significance for the Kurdish nationalist project is indeed based mainly on their reproductive roles. Kurdish women gain respect and status through giving birth to numerous children (Anter 1989: 10). Kurdish nationalists view Kurdish women as biological and cultural reproducers of the Kurdish nation. Kurdish women are

⁴⁴ Interview with Firdevs Gümüsoğlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁴⁵ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

also seen as the defenders and transmitters of national culture and traditions – i.e. as reproducers of national boundaries. Kurdish women are symbols of Kurdish identity or cultural authenticity. Thus, Kurdish nationalism attaches a great deal of importance to the traditional motherhood role of women.

Just as the Kemalists viewed the emancipation of Turkish women as part and parcel of their project of modernity, Kurdish nationalists have invited Kurdish women to be active participants in the nationalist movement – both as women *guerrillas* fighting against the Turkish state for independence and as *politicians* active in the Turkish Parliament challenging the state and its ideology from within the system.⁴⁶ The PKK, for instance, claimed to have incorporated thousands of young women into its ranks, arguing that women guerrillas represented “free and liberated” Kurdish women (Yalçın-Heckmann and Van Gelder 1999: 18). These young women were different from the more traditional rural Kurdish women because they were seen as liberated from the “oppressive” feudal and tribal traditions and hierarchies and the Turkish state. Indeed, by joining the ranks of the PKK, young Kurdish women challenged the existing familial and tribal patriarchal relations and customs.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ As the first Kurdish woman ever elected to the Turkish Parliament, Leyla Zana came to represent a rural Kurdish woman who became empowered and politicized through the Kurdish national movement (Yalçın-Heckmann and Van Gelder 1999: 23). She was married to Mehdi Zana, a Kurdish nationalist who was elected as the mayor of Diyarbakır in 1977. After the military coup of 1980, he was jailed for engaging in separatist activities. After her husband’s arrest, Zana learned Turkish, became politicized and joined the first legal pro-Kurdish party HEP. She was elected as a deputy in the 1991 elections. In 1994, her immunity and that of other five Kurdish (DEP) deputies was lifted. She was tried for treason and was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment (see footnote #27).

⁴⁷ As noted earlier, one of the main aims of the Kurdish left (in the 1970s), the Kurdish national movement and the PKK was to eliminate tribal social structures and hierarchies and religious factionalism in Kurdish society as feudal, tribal and religious ties made it difficult for a more unified nationalist movement and a national identity to develop.

While the PKK leader Öcalan “compared the oppression of women in Kurdish society to the national oppression of the Kurds and called for a double liberation”, women were largely absent in the upper echelons of the PKK (Van Bruinessen 2001: 105).⁴⁸ Furthermore, while joining the PKK represented an alternative to marriage and traditional gender roles for young women, it also meant “enter[ing into] a new set of unequal relations and a new stereotyped role” (*ibid.*: 106). Male and female guerrillas were not allowed to have intimate relationships as they were expected to fulfil their “revolutionary” mission and “patriotic” duties (Yalçın-Heckmann and Van Gelder 1999: 21).⁴⁹

While the gender discourse articulated by the PKK presented Kurdish women as oppressed by feudal and tribal traditions and liberated by and empowered through the PKK, gender discourses articulated by other Kurdish nationalist men emphasize Kurdish women’s equality with men, arguing that it is one of the oldest and most important Kurdish national traits. These Kurdish nationalists claim that Kurdish women enjoy more freedom than Turkish, Persian or Arab women as they do not wear the veil, they work and fight alongside men, and they even serve as chieftains of tribes (*aşiret reisi*).⁵⁰ In an interview published in the Turkish journal *İkibine Doğru* a prominent Kurdish nationalist intellectual Musa Anter argues that:

⁴⁸ Van Bruinessen notes that Öcalan’s ex-wife, Kesire Yıldırım, was the only woman among the founders of the PKK and she posed the most serious challenge to Öcalan’s leadership, attempting to take over his position as the PKK’s chairman (2001: 106).

⁴⁹ As noted in Chapter 2, the transgression of established social norms is often seen by male nationalist elites as merely out of necessity and often would not translate into post-independence gains for women.

⁵⁰ See the interviews conducted by Aydın and Yalçın (1989) with some Kurdish women who reside in the eastern city of Van – published in the journal *İkibine Doğru* under the title “Feminizmin Kürtçesi” (Feminism in Kurdish style).

In villages the tradition of [Kurdish women's] equality with their men continues. Kurdish woman is free and reproductive [*doğurgan*]. She doesn't run away from or avoid men. She works alongside her man in the garden, in the field and at harvest time.

... Many Kurdish traditions have their roots in the pre-Islamic religion Zerdüştlük. We don't have the Islamic tesettür (covering). [Kurdish] women's dresses have cleavage and their sleeves have slits. Women's right to testimony had always existed and still exists. While in the Islamic tradition there was no female caliphate or a female minister, Kurds have had numerous female leaders (*reis*).

Battering is considered improper [*ayıp*]. It is not viewed as normal. Physically, many Kurdish women are stronger than their husbands. But they are respectful [*hürmetlidir*]. [Kurdish society] is not characterized by patriarchal male-domination (1989: 10; translation mine).

Just as Ziya Gökalp argued that Turkish women had equal legal status with men among the pre-Islamic ancient Turks of Central Asia, Anter claims that Kurdish women have always been free, respected and revered in Kurdish society. For Anter, gender equality is an old Kurdish tradition and such Islamic customs as seclusion of women and veiling are not Kurdish tribal traditions.⁵¹ Like Anter, other Kurdish male nationalists point to those Kurdish women who reached high positions as tribal chieftains or rulers and thus claim the superiority of the Kurds over their Turkish, Arab, and Persian neighbours.⁵²

Such claims have been challenged by Kurdish feminists, who argue that they not only serve to hide existing gender inequalities in Kurdish society but also lead to the conclusion that "there is no need for a Kurdish women's movement". Kurdish feminists

⁵¹ It is important to note that for many Kurds, especially for conservative Sunni Kurds, Islam constitutes an important part of their identity. Islamic beliefs and practices form an important part of local or regional culture, customs and traditions.

⁵² Van Bruinessen notes that Kurdish women reached high position in society through birth or marriage, owing their position to powerful fathers and/or husbands. If a woman belonged to a prominent tribal family or not, i.e. her "high birth may [have] compensate[d] for the disadvantages of female gender" (2001: 100-101).

claim that they are faced with the double oppression of gender and ethnicity.⁵³ They criticize Kurdish men for asking them to give priority to Kurdish national interests (Yaşar 1996; Zelal 1997). They argue that their demands and issues relating to their gender identity are always being “postponed”. At the same time, while Kurdish women are oppressed in male-dominated Kurdish society, they are not passive victims waiting to be “liberated”, since they employ strategies to resist oppression stemming from their ethnicity and gender.

Kurdish feminists criticize the male-dominated nature of Kurdish society or, in Kayhan’s words, Kurdish patriarchy⁵⁴. Like Kurdish left nationalists, they argue that Kurdish women are oppressed by tribal customs and norms which originate from the feudal social structure still prevalent in eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey.⁵⁵ They criticize the existing family structures (extended families)⁵⁶, arranged marriages, bride-price and polygamy, which are practiced by large segments of the Kurdish population.⁵⁷ Kurdish feminists also agree with Kurdish nationalist men on the significance of women’s traditional roles as mothers for the reproduction of national boundaries and for “the survival of the nation”. Indeed, Kurdish women are praised as the gatekeepers of national language, customs, and traditions.

⁵³ Interviews with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, and with Jiyan and Jujin Kurdish women’s groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul, Turkey.

⁵⁴ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁵⁵ Interviews with Jiyan and Jujin Kurdish women’s groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul, Turkey.

⁵⁶ Kayhan supports extended family structures, arguing that paternal families of married Kurdish women protect them from being subjected to domestic violence (interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999). Yalçın-Heckmann’s study of gender roles in Kurdish tribes reveals that young brides, especially from prominent tribal families, rely on continual support and protection of their paternal families (1995: 223).

⁵⁷ Interviews with Jiyan and Jujin Kurdish women’s groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul, Turkey.

Kurdish feminists part company with Kurdish nationalists, however, when they argue that Kurdish women might be revered as *mothers* but they are certainly not respected as *individuals*.⁵⁸ They are exposed to domestic violence and the notion of men's or family honour puts restrictions on women's freedom. Kayhan explains, however, that while, as Kurdish feminists, they criticize Kurdish men and family structures for trapping women inside the family, they have not yet attempted to question and subvert Kurdish women's motherhood role.⁵⁹ This is because Kurdish feminists, like Kurdish nationalist men, view the Kurdish language as one of distinguishing characteristics of Kurdishness – which has been preserved and transmitted to younger generation by Kurdish mothers. Indeed, the emphasis put on Kurdish in Kurdish nationalist and feminist writing reveals its importance in the construction of the Kurdish nation. This is not surprising as Kurdish nationalism has evolved in response to and in relation with Turkish nationalism.⁶⁰ For instance, instead of curbing Kurdish nationalism, Law 2932 of 1983, which banned the use of Kurdish, turned the Kurdish language into “a symbol of Kurdish nationhood” (Yavuz 1998). Discourses and practices surrounding the nation-building process aim at fixing identity/difference and delineating boundaries. Kurdish efforts to standardize and promote the *Kurmanci* dialect as the official Kurdish language constitute part of the nation-building process.

Since it is through their distinct language that Kurds differentiate themselves from “the Other” (i.e. Turkish-speaking population), it is important to preserve and transmit the Kurdish language. Kurdish feminists argue that Kurdish women's subordination in

⁵⁸ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁵⁹ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁶⁰ As discussed in Chapter 3, the Turkish nationalist elite placed a heavy emphasis on the purification and standardization of Turkish language in the 1930s.

the family and the restrictions placed on their freedom in society, ironically, helped the survival of Kurdish and the preservation of the “authenticity” of the Kurdish national culture (Canan 1996a). As Kurdish women are less visible in the public realm and have less opportunity to interact with the Turkish culture, they stand for “authenticity” and “immutability” of Kurdish nation. While not denying that the family is a source of oppression for Kurdish women, Kurdish feminists view the Kurdish family as the primary site of *resistance* against assimilation.

Yet, Kurdish feminists continue to point to the ways in which women are revered as mothers of the nation in Kurdish nationalist discourses but trapped into the family in everyday life. Furthermore, they criticize the ways in which Kurdish mothers are viewed only as *passive transmitters* of culture, rather than *active producers* of national culture. Thus, Kurdish feminists view national culture and identity not essential and fixed, but as entities which are always “under construction”.

Additionally, as mothers, Kurdish women do not only reproduce and transmit the Kurdish national culture but also engage in public protests against the Turkish state. Indeed, since May 1995 relatives, mostly mothers, of those people who “disappeared” in police custody have been organizing sit-ins in İstanbul, demanding information about their missing loved ones. They are known as *Saturday Mothers* (Cumartesi Anneleri)⁶¹ since they gather every Saturday in front of Galatasaray High School in İstiklâl Street, reading a press release and holding pictures of their “disappeared” relatives.⁶² Since May 1998, however, police officers have been breaking up the peaceful protest of the Saturday

⁶¹ For more on Saturday Mothers see the book by journalist Ece Temelkuran (1997).

⁶² Some “disappeared” due to their suspected political activities; others “disappeared” right after the 1980 military coup. Many of the “disappeared” were Kurdish villagers, who were arrested under the Anti-terror Law for “feeding and sheltering PKK members”.

Mothers, arguing that their gatherings are illegal. The police aimed to silence them, arresting on several occasions, more than 100 people, including elderly women, lawyers, children, and members and officials of the Human Rights Association.⁶³ As in other regions of the world, most notably Latin America⁶⁴, Kurdish women mobilized on the basis of their maternal roles, engaged in public demonstrations against the state, protesting the “disappearances” of their loved ones. By entering the public sphere through collective action and into the political life on the basis of “politicization of motherhood”, these women challenged the existing division of labour which trapped them into the private realm of the family. The peaceful protest of the Saturday Mothers has been effective in making public the “disappearances” in detention. Kurdish women as mothers, then, are not only biological and cultural reproducers of the Kurdish nation but also active participants in the national struggle.

While the Kurdish national narrative cast Kurdish women as *mothers* of the nation and as *guerrilla fighters*, Kurdish women are also major *contributors to a new Kurdish national narrative*. As noted by scholars of nationalism, elites play a major role in constructing the nation and national narratives (Anderson 1991; Brass 1985, 1991). Kurdish feminists, some of whom are professionals and intellectuals, constitute a part of the emerging Kurdish national elite. Some of them are among the recently urbanized and

⁶³ In December 1996 the Turkish police established a bureau for the investigation of disappearances but the relatives of the “disappeared” are skeptical of this project. So far, no serious investigations of the fate of the “disappeared” seem to have been conducted.

⁶⁴ The best known case is that of the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. After the military coup in 1976, around 30,000 victims, so-called “subversives”, including union members, students, intellectuals and pregnant women were abducted. In 1977, 14 women gathered in the Plaza de Mayo demanding information about their missing children and began to meet there regularly every Thursday. They were joined by more women whose children and grandchildren had disappeared (Feijoó and Nari 1994; Hensman 1996).

educated. Their writings reflect the efforts of the Kurdish elite to create the Kurdish nation. Through their writings they help delineate the boundaries of the Kurdish nation and contribute to the production of a new Kurdish national narrative.⁶⁵ They help construct a new Kurdish identity, as distinct from Turkish national identity, and through their journals they disseminate to the public their formulations of the Kurdish nation.

Kurdish feminists recognize the centrality of rewriting/reinterpreting and remembering Kurdish history, and recording Kurdish women's experiences and struggles. They point to the importance of producing knowledge in the creation of Kurdish nation's and women's identities.⁶⁶ Thus, knowledge production is identified as an important site for Kurdish women's struggles. On the pages of *Jujin* and *Roza*, feminists wrote on Kurdish women's groups in 1970 and 1980s (see *Jujin* 1-4, 6-10).⁶⁷ They also collect data and material on famous Kurdish women – political activists like Leyla Quasim⁶⁸ and Leyla Zana, and Kurdish female artists and intellectuals.⁶⁹ Kurdish feminist journals served as a forum for debates on the problems, needs and demands of Kurdish women. Kurdish feminists' efforts to create a Kurdish national narrative, as distinct from the Turkish one, caught the attention of Turkish authorities. Several issues of the Kurdish feminist journal *Roza* were confiscated by the authorities and Fatma

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the discourses of Kurdish nationalist men to create a homogeneous Kurdish nation see Hirschler (2001). While Hirschler's discussion highlights the heterogeneity of Kurdish national historiography in Turkey, it does not pay attention to the contributions of Kurdish feminists to the creation of a Kurdish national narrative.

⁶⁶ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁶⁷ These journals also devote substantial space to the ongoing struggles of Third world women against sexism, racism, colonialism, imperialism, authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism in regions like the Middle East and Latin America. The translations of the works of American feminists of colour such as bell hooks were also published.

⁶⁸ During the Kurdish rebellion of 1974-1975 in Iraq, Leyla Quasim was the first woman to be hanged by the Iraqi authorities in 1974 for conspiracy against the state.

⁶⁹ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Kayhan, the owner of the journal, was charged with “separatist propaganda” by the DGMs under the Anti-Terror Law.⁷⁰

In sum, the Kurdish national movement is a site in which individuals and groups have been constructing a new Kurdish identity and a Kurdish national narrative, subverting the dominant Turkish one. Kurdish women have participated in the national movement in diverse ways, as mothers, fighters, activists, and as politicians. As a group of intellectual Kurdish women, Kurdish feminists contribute to the construction of Kurdish national identity. They are active participants in the Kurdish national movement, which has challenged the homogenizing and universalizing Turkish nationalism by articulating competing counter-narratives and forming new collective identity for the Kurds. Yet, as argued in Chapter 2, national narratives often evoke themes of communal homogeneity and imagining/building communities often involve regulating women’s bodies, behaviour, and sexuality. The reproduction of national identity often depends on silencing internal differences such as gender. Yet, the continuous process of the narration of the Kurdish nation has provided a space for Kurdish feminists to criticize the homogenizing and gendered discourses of Kurdish nationalist men. They have exposed the masculinist “narration of the nation” and subverted the roles and identities imposed on Kurdish women by Kurdish national discourses. Drawing attention to the particular interests and demands of Kurdish women, Kurdish feminists have disrupted the homogeneity of the Kurdish nation and the fixity of identity as presented by Kurdish nationalist men. It is important to note that Kurdish feminists define their identity not

⁷⁰ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

only in relation to Kurdish men but also in relation to Turkish feminists. The next section focuses on Kurdish feminist discourses and activism in İstanbul in the 1990s.

3. Discourses and Activism of Kurdish feminists

Why do we define our feminism as Kurdish feminism? First, we want to differentiate it from Turkish feminism. In Turkey, if feminism is not given a name, that is if it is not specified with an ethnic identity, it is understood as Turkish feminism. It is denied that there are other women with different ethnic identities. The woman discourse, then, serves the purposes of those women who are members of the dominant nation, and it serves to hide our differences. Second, it [Kurdish feminism] asserts a political stance against the refusal and denial of our Kurdish identity (Kayhan 1999a: 3; translation mine).

Kurdish feminists, like Turkish feminists, were involved in the leftist groups and organizations of the 1970s. Through their participation in these organizations Kurdish women acquired organizational skills, tactics, and strategies. Kurdish feminists, like Turkish feminists, argued that, within the leftist organizations, women were often assigned “women’s tasks” such as typing and washing the dishes, rather than street activism and decision-making.⁷¹ After the 1980 military coup, most Kurdish men and some Kurdish women were jailed. It was during this period that Turkish feminists got together and started to talk about their experiences in the leftist movements, forming consciousness-raising groups in İstanbul and Ankara. Kurdish feminists and/or women also participated in these groups.

Yet, soon Kurdish feminists realized that in Turkish feminist groups and the meetings Turkish feminists organized, they were not welcome to discuss their oppression

⁷¹ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

stemming from their ethnic difference.⁷² For instance, during the 1989 Women's Day celebrations, Fatma Kayhan wanted to read a paper written in Kurdish. She was not allowed by Turkish feminists, who did not want to "antagonize the police".⁷³ Kayhan wore a tape on her mouth, protesting Turkish feminists. Similarly, Kurdish feminists and women participated in the first Women's General Assembly (*Birinci Kadın Kurultayı*) of 1989, where differences among Turkish and Kurdish feminists became more visible.⁷⁴ In 1990, arguing that their voices, experiences and demands have been silenced within the Turkish feminist movement, a group of Kurdish feminists formed the Independent Kurdish Woman's Group (*Bağımsız Kürt Kadın Grubu*).⁷⁵ Kurdish feminists decided to organize and struggle for their liberation *autonomously* from Turkish feminists because of the latter's "policies of assimilation, exclusion, and denial, in the name of a universal feminine identity" (*Roza* 1: 4). According to Fatma Kayhan, a prominent Kurdish feminist, Kurdish women's agenda, priorities, resistance struggles, and strategies are different from Turkish feminists. While there are only a few Turkish feminists who have been questioning all aspects of Kemalism, Kurdish women's mere existence defies the official ideology.⁷⁶

Kurdish feminists claim that as they are faced with the double oppression of gender and ethnicity, fighting for their liberation as women is pointless as long as their national community is subordinated. Thus, struggles for women's liberation and national

⁷² Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey and interview with Jujin Kurdish feminist group, August 10, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁷³ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁷⁴ Interview with Jiyan Kurdish women's group, August 7 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁷⁵ Interview with Jiyan Kurdish women's group, August 7 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁷⁶ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

liberation must be waged simultaneously (Yaşar 1996; Ayşegül 1996a).⁷⁷ They argue that “while Turkish women want us to forget our Kurdish identity, Kurdish men want us to give up our femininity” (Yaşar 1996). Kurdish feminists, then, refuse to choose between nationalism and feminism, claiming that it is possible to wage struggles as both feminists and nationalists. They argue that Kurdish women need to take a critical stance against Kemalism, Kurdish nationalism and the Turkish feminist movement.⁷⁸

Like Turkish feminists, Kurdish feminists put a special emphasis on their autonomy.⁷⁹ For them, autonomy means independence from Kurdish political parties and social and political organizations, Kurdish men and the Turkish feminist movement (*Roza* 1: 5 & 15: 3-6; Akdeniz 1998). Kurdish feminists and women were active in the women’s commissions of some Kurdish cultural and political organizations but they were not able to voice their concerns and demands *as women*. As one Kurdish woman put it:

We were active in mixed organizations. There were men too. The chairperson of the women’s commission was, in fact, a male friend of ours. We had not yet developed women’s consciousness. ... When we framed our demands using a feminist motto like “having control over our bodies”, men felt quite uncomfortable. They did not take us seriously. In fact, this is common practice [among men]. And we were not able to express ourselves openly. In that process, we frequently held meetings. We formed a consciousness-raising group. ... The age group ranged between 20 and 30. Some women were married with kids. ... They were not as active due to their responsibilities at home. ... Then we formed the Azadi Kurdish Women’s group (translation mine).⁸⁰

⁷⁷ It is important to note that not all Kurdish feminists advocate secession. For instance, while Jiyar Kurdish Women’s Group does not view an independent Kurdish state as a viable option, Fatma Kayhan supports the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

⁷⁸ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁷⁹ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁸⁰ Interview with Jiyar Kurdish women’s group, August 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Kurdish feminists insist that women's (Turkish and Kurdish) empowerment requires autonomous women's groups and organizations. They are also critical of the Directorate General on the Status and the Problems of Women (KSSGM) for articulating a homogenizing and universalizing gender discourse, ignoring ethnic heterogeneity. They criticize KSSGM for formulating standard programs and policies and imposing them on Kurdish women.⁸¹ Kurdish feminists also criticize the Association for Support and Training of Woman Candidates (KA-DER). For them, neither KSSGM nor KA-DER represents the interests, needs and demands of Kurdish women.⁸² They also criticize KA-DER for seeking to increase women's representation in the parliament through male-dominated political parties.⁸³ While it is important to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies, this goal cannot be accomplished through male-dominated parties.⁸⁴ Thus, both Turkish and Kurdish feminists need to maintain their autonomy from male-dominated social and political organizations (Canan 1997b).

Kurdish feminists also make public the "private" issues of domestic violence and sexual harassment and to expose the oppression women suffer because of their gender. In fact, violence against women occupies a central place on the agenda of Kurdish feminists, who actively support the initiatives undertaken to expose violence against women in Turkey (see *Jujin* 8-9: 10-11 and 19). Kurdish feminists have written extensively on the issue of domestic violence against women, virginity tests, honour killings, war rapes, and sexual torture (see Keskin 1997; Canan 1997a; Keskin and Tanrıku 1997; Dara 1997;

⁸¹ Interview with Jujin feminist group, August 10, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁸² Interviews with Jiyan and Jujin Kurdish women's groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul, Turkey.

⁸³ Interview with Jujin feminist group, August 10, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁸⁴ Interview with Jujin feminist group, August 10, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

Birgül 1998; Xezal 2000). They have argued that rape has long been a weapon of war, used against women as a way of attacking men's and national honour. They have identified war rapes as one of the most important issues facing Kurdish women who live in southeastern Turkey.

Kurdish feminists condemn those forms of practices, such as polygamy and honour killings, which seek to control and regulate women's sexuality (Canan 1997a; Dilşah 1997; Birgül 1998; Xezal 2000). A group of Kurdish women established a woman's center (*Kadın Merkezi – KA-MER*) in Diyarbakır, a metropole located in southeastern Turkey, to help women exposed to domestic violence. The center provides women with services such as psychological and legal guidance. It also provides a telephone hotline for women seeking support and information. Women working in the center argue that Kurdish women are victimized and exploited particularly in the family. They argue that women's empowerment derives from women having knowledge about what their rights are and being able to demand them. Thus, they organize workshops to inform women of their civil and political rights. However, they argue, while women can be made aware of certain legislative changes, such as the passing of a law against family violence, they still confront a patriarchal family structure, a justice system and certain entrenched societal norms that inhibit these laws from being effective (see Özlem 1998, *Jujin* 10: 45-47).

Kurdish feminists also point to the problems such as poverty, exploitation as a low-income labour force, discrimination, and racism that Kurdish women experience due

to their migration to metropolises.⁸⁵ They argue that Kurdish women are expected to be assimilated into Turkish society and culture, by speaking the official language fluently and by adopting the clothing styles of urban Turkish women.⁸⁶ Migrant Kurdish women usually work in informal, low-income, insecure jobs such as piecework and domestic services (Songül 1997; Özdemir 1998).⁸⁷

Kurdish feminists and women also formed independent women's groups and organizations such as Roza and Jujin Kurdish feminist groups and Arjin and Jiyan Kurdish women's groups, Jiyan Kurdish Woman's Culture House, a Kurdish women's foundation (*Kürt Kadın Dayanışma ve Kadın Sorunlarını Araştırma Vakfı – K-KADAV*) and a few independent Kurdish women's platforms. Publishing journals and forming Kurdish women's groups and associations, Kurdish feminists create new public spheres for debate, discussion and identity construction/negotiation. Through these periodicals, they have not only expressed and communicated their demands, but also debated with other feminist or non-feminist women's groups and negotiated and reconstructed their identities.

⁸⁵ Interviews with Jiyan and Jujin Kurdish women's groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul, Turkey.

⁸⁶ Heidi Wedel's study (2001) focuses on Kurdish migrant women's local political participation in squatter settlements (*gecekondus*). While much research has been done on *gecekondus*, there are only a few studies on Kurdish migrant women (see Wedel 2001; Secor 2004) and socio-economic and political consequences of migration for Kurdish women and their families.

4. Is Turkish feminism “White”? : Troubled Sisterhood and Kurdish Feminist Interventions

Most of the articles published in Kurdish feminist journals criticize Turkish feminists for ignoring ethnic differences among women (Ayşegül 1996b; Kayhan 1997, 1998a). Kurdish feminists ask Turkish feminists to be more critical of the Kemalist national discourse and to distance themselves from the state (Ayşegül 1996b). They criticize Turkish feminists for supporting the war against Kurdish people by remaining silent on the issue (*Roza* 14 (1998): 12; *Jujin* 3-4 (1997): 27).

Recently, on the pages of *Pazartesi*, *Roza*, and *Jujin*, Turkish and Kurdish feminists engaged in a debate over a state-initiated project called Multipurpose Community Centers (*Çok Amaçlı Toplum Merkezleri – ÇATOM*). ÇATOMs are established as a part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP)⁸⁸ by the Regional Development Directorate of GAP in cooperation with the Turkish Development Foundation (*Türkiye Kalkınma Vakfı*), in eastern and southeastern cities, which are mostly populated by Kurds. ÇATOMs emphasize women’s traditional tasks such as sewing, needle work, and child care, aiming to empower women by organizing courses on issues such as household economics, maternal and child health, nutrition, family planning and birth control, and income-generating activities such as handicrafts and carpet weaving.⁸⁹ There are also language courses offered by these centers, where women could learn how to speak, write and read in Turkish.

⁸⁸ The GAP is the largest regional development project implemented in nine cities of Southeastern Anatolia. It aims to redress regional disparities between Turkey’s western and eastern regions.

⁸⁹ For more on ÇATOMs see KSSGM, *Periodic Reports of States Parties to CEDAW*, December 1999 (available at <http://www.kssgm.gov.tr/cedeng.htm>).

ÇATOMs have been criticized by some Turkish feminists in *Pazartesi* on the grounds that they view women as a low-income labour force that can be exploited in the future industrialization of the region (Düzkan 1998). By putting emphasis on women's traditional tasks, such as sewing, cooking and other household tasks, ÇATOMs perpetuate women's traditional social roles and thus their subordination rather than challenging prevailing gender hierarchies. Ayşe Düzkan, a prominent Turkish feminist, expressed her skepticism about ÇATOMs by arguing that they are directed against Kurds rather than the region and they aim to assimilate Kurds (1998: 2-3). Despite this criticism, however, she argues that, in the long run, the ÇATOM experience can be empowering for women because by learning Turkish, Kurdish women can have easier access to the services available to women and rely less on Kurdish men⁹⁰ and this can eliminate the inequalities between Kurdish men and women.

Kurdish feminists, however, view ÇATOMs as one of the many vehicles of the Turkish state to assimilate the Kurdish population (Kayhan 1998b; Bawer 1998; Sema 1998; Canan 1998a; Dost 1999). They argue that through ÇATOMs the state imposes its birth control policies on the Kurdish people for population control purposes.

The targeted mass; women ... For them, it was Kurdish women who were responsible for engendering and enhancing terrorism. Then, urgent measures must have been introduced. These measures should have been in

⁹⁰ Kurdish men have greater access to education compared to women. Also, Kurdish men, who did not attend school, learn Turkish through compulsory military service. Between September 1992 and August 1993, I participated in a survey project, under the supervision of Prof. Yılmaz Esmer at Boğaziçi University, on the credibility of press and reader perceptions in İstanbul. In one of the neighbourhoods (populated mainly by migrants) where I was assigned to conduct interviews, I had difficulty finding women who could speak Turkish. At two occasions, I was explained that they were Kurdish migrants from the southeast of Turkey and that Kurdish women could not speak Turkish. Their male relatives (father and brother) helped me conduct the interviews.

tune with the discourses and practices of the existing world's conjuncture. [They should have sought] both assimilation and control over the population growth. The solution was STATE FEMINISM: womanly discourse. Womanly language (Canan 1998a: 2, translation mine).

Kurdish feminists view ÇATOMs as an implementation of *state feminist* policies, which advance a state agenda that works against the interests of Kurdish women.

The state seeks to realize its assimilation policies through institutions like ÇATOMs, calculating that assimilated Kurdish women would also assimilate their children ... The availability of free sterilization in the region reveals the deep interest of the state in this issue [population control] (Bawer 1998: 38-39; translation mine).

Kurdish feminists criticize Turkish feminists for assuming a “missionary attitude” to the issue and for deciding on behalf of Kurdish women whether ÇATOMs are advantageous for them or not. While they agree with Turkish feminists that women should have the right to control over their bodies, they are against what they see as an assimilationist policy of the Turkish state.⁹¹ Also, they criticize Turkish feminists for supporting Turkish-language education for Kurdish women. Ironically, they argue, Kurdish women’s subordination in the family and lack of access to schooling may have protected the Kurdish language (Canan 1996a). Kurdish feminists argue that they are not against education opportunities for Kurdish women.

Rather, we demand the right to education in our own tongue. The state should stop trying to teach us Turkish through establishing new institutions! ... The state sets learning Turkish as the means to civilization. Women do not need to learn Turkish to be able to wage their struggles (Kayhan 1998b: 3; translation mine).

⁹¹ It is important to note that this section focuses on the discourses Turkish and Kurdish feminists articulate over such issues as reproductive rights. It does not examine the birth control policies and practices of the Turkish state.

Both Turkish and Kurdish feminists, however, are skeptical about state-planned and top down imposed development programs. The debate about ÇATOMs is also instructive, as it shows that particular initiatives can be (and can be perceived as) either empowering or disempowering depending on where particular women stand in society.

The 1998 International Women's Day celebrations also stirred a debate between Kurdish and Turkish feminists. In 1998, women's groups divided into two and held demonstrations in different parts of İstanbul to celebrate the International Women's Day. One of these demonstrations, *Say No to War and Violence against Women (Savaşa ve Kadına Yönelik Şiddete Hayır)*, was organized by Turkish feminists, a group of Kurdish feminists (*Jujin* Kurdish feminist group), and a few women who were active in the newly established leftist political party Freedom and Solidarity Party (*Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi – ÖDP*). This demonstration took place in Şişli and there was no incident in this meeting. The other demonstration, *Freedom is in Organized Power (Özgürlük Örgütlü Güçte)*, which took place in Taksim, was organized mostly by Kurdish women, and backed by the People's Democracy Party (HADEP), a pro-Kurdish party supported mainly by Kurds, and the Turkish left. The only Turkish feminist group that participated in this demonstration was the Feminist Woman's Circle (*Feminist Kadın Çevresi*) (Kayhan 1998a). The police claimed that it was an illegal demonstration and used teargas to disperse women attending the demonstration in Taksim. The police also turned back a convoy of six buses carrying women from Ankara and İstanbul to a Women's Day March in Diyarbakır (located in southeastern Turkey).

After this incident, Kurdish feminists argued that it has become more difficult to build solidarities with Turkish feminists because they continue to ignore their ethnic

differences (Kayhan 1998a: 10). When the discourse of women's "common oppression" began to dominate the March 8 Platform, a group of Kurdish feminists chose to join the other non-feminist platform, even though they were a feminist group.⁹² According to Fatma Kayhan, they are justified in their criticisms of Turkish feminists because "while Turkish women were saying no to war and violence against women in Şişli, Kurdish women were being beaten in Taksim" (1998a: 10).

Handan Koç (1998), a prominent Turkish radical feminist, responded to these charges, arguing that women who chose to go to Şişli were women who accept that women are oppressed because they are women. She reminded Kurdish feminists of the importance of the autonomy of the feminist movement. Kurdish feminists also criticized Filiz Koçali, a prominent Turkish feminist, for speaking on behalf of Kurdish women (Canan 1998b). In an article published in *Pazartesi* Koçali (1998) stated that they should have celebrated the International Women's Day in Taksim with Kurdish women who are active in or give support to the pro-Kurdish party HADEP. Kurdish feminists criticized Koçali for treating women who are active in HADEP (Kurdish women of rural background and working class women) as the "true" representatives of Kurdish women and for ignoring other Kurdish women, including Kurdish feminists. They claimed that Kurdish women could talk for themselves and could articulate their own discourses (*Jim û Jiyan*, 1999 (1): 3-5).

Kurdish feminists point to the difficulties encountered in building alliances with Turkish feminists. One woman explains:

⁹² Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

They [Turkish feminists] say “of course we are not against Kurdish slogans and banners. But not now; because the state would put pressure on us and the movement would demobilize” etc etc. Then they said “if you decide to open banners and yell slogans in Kurdish, and if we were to run into the police, then you would suffer the consequences for that, not us.” This lack of solidarity as well as support from Turkish feminists ... created an environment of distrust between us. ... Turkish feminists need to reflect on their feminisms and their stance on racism (translation mine).⁹³

As this quotation reveals, it is difficult for Kurdish and Turkish feminists to get together and mobilize around a discourse of solidarity.⁹⁴ If women are to build solidarities, it must be on the basis of accepting the differences among women (see Canan 1996b: 8; Canan 1999). Kurdish feminists accept that it was necessary for Turkish feminists to highlight the common oppression of women in the 1980s to declare their independence from Turkish men. Now, they argue, it is necessary for Turkish feminists to move beyond this discourse since it is this very discourse of “common oppression of women” that prevents differently situated women from forming alliances.⁹⁵

Furthermore, Turkish feminism remains embedded in the practices and discourses of the Kemalist project of modernity. They draw attention to the collusion between Turkish feminism and Kemalism pointing to the missionary modernizing projects and universalizing discourses of Turkish feminists, which view Kurdish women as *victims* of their tribal culture and inevitably deny Kurdish women any agency. Thus, for Kurdish

⁹³ Interview with Jiyan Kurdish women’s group, August 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁹⁴ Kurdish feminists argue that when Turkish feminists accuse them of undermining the feminist cause by fragmenting the movement, Kurdish feminists forget their differences and get together. The differences among Kurdish women lose their importance when there is such outside criticism and when they situate themselves in relation to Turkish feminists. Interview with Jiyan Kurdish women’s group, August 7, 1999, İstanbul.

⁹⁵ Interviews with Jiyan and Jujin Kurdish women’s groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul, Turkey.

feminists, Turkish feminists need to question their relation with the official discourse, and must rethink their priorities and reconstruct their agenda (Kayhan 1998a: 9).⁹⁶

Turkish feminists interpret the call by Kurdish feminists for recognition of their differences as an attempt to dilute the focus of the feminist movement.⁹⁷ They fear that the emphasis on differences among women would eventually lead to the abandonment of feminists concerns and politics.⁹⁸ According to Firdevs Gümüšoğlu, a Kemalist feminist with a Kurdish ethnic background, there was no need for an independent Kurdish women's movement.⁹⁹ She argued that such fragmentation within the movement would only result in the demobilization of the movement, which would signal the end of women's politics. Turkish feminists contest the notion that there should be feminisms specific to each racial, ethnic or cultural group. As argued in Chapter 2, the invocation of a community of women often generates a feminist movement that could not adequately address or account for women who are simultaneously faced with oppressions based on race or ethnicity or religion or class or sexuality. The Turkish feminist movement has excluded those women for whom gender was not a primary identity.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Kurdish feminists are suspicious of the "we" invoked by the Turkish feminist movement. Indeed, the problem of when and how to say "we women" remains unsolved.

⁹⁶ Interview with Jiyar Kurdish women's group, August 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁹⁷ Interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

⁹⁸ Yelda, one of the prominent Turkish socialist feminists, who was active in the feminist campaigns of the 1980s, criticized Turkish radical and socialist feminists for ignoring Kurdish women's ethnic differences. For Yelda's criticisms see 1998: 109-182; also for the replies of Turkish feminists like Ayşe Düzkan and Filiz Koçali see Yelda (1988: 329-340).

⁹⁹ Interview with Firdevs Gümüšoğlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

¹⁰⁰ The point was made by Kurdish feminists many times during the interviews. Kurdish feminists repeatedly mentioned that they did not feel they belonged to the Turkish feminist movement.

Do Turkish and Kurdish feminists cooperate? On which basis do (or could) they form alliances/solidarities? Even though Kurdish feminists are critical of Turkish feminists for ignoring ethnicity and repressing differences among women, both groups try to cooperate in organizing campaigns and meetings. Violence against women is perhaps one issue that unites Kurdish and Turkish feminists. For instance, Turkish feminist groups (such as March 8 Woman's Platform, Feminist Woman's Circle, Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation) and Kurdish feminist and women's groups (Roza, Arjin Kurdish Women's Group, Jiyen Woman's Culture House, Jujin Group, K-KADAV) got together in İstanbul and organized campaigns such as "Say No to Domestic Violence" to expose domestic violence against women in Turkey (see *Jujin* 5: 2-3). These are signs of ongoing attempts to create bridges between different communities of women.

Conclusion: Building Bridges or Barricades?

Throughout the 1990s, Kurdish feminists have increasingly voiced their experiences of exclusion and invisibility in the Turkish feminist movement. Through their publications and activism Kurdish feminists have exposed the exclusionary discourses and practices of Turkish feminists and Kurdish nationalist men. They have also rejected identities and roles imposed on Kurdish women by different social and political projects. They have problematized the ethnic dimension of the Kemalist nationalist discourse and accused Turkish feminists of privileging patriarchy over ethnicity, ignoring ethnic diversity of women. Turkish feminists, they have argued, cannot address the concerns of "other" women because they universalize from the experiences of Turkish middle-class, urban

professional women. Ignoring “the multiplicity of women’s experiences”, Turkish feminists impose uniformity over diverse feminist discourses and practices in Turkey.

While Kurdish feminists situate themselves and define their identities in relation to both Turkish feminists and Kurdish men, there is not much discussion on the exclusions they suffered at the hands of Turkish men. In fact, there has been a tendency in much of the writing by Kurdish feminists to state that *all* Turkish women oppress *all* Kurdish women. The exclusive focus on Turkish feminists can partly be explained by the fact that Kurdish women expect more of Turkish feminists, who are, after all, trying to forward the rights, status and opportunities of women in Turkey. Kurdish feminists feel silenced, ignored and oppressed, not only by patriarchal, capitalist and nationalist structures, discourses, and practices, but also by the very social movement which opposes to women’s oppression, i.e. feminism. The charges of oppression and exclusion, however, are levelled not just against Turkish feminists but *all* Turkish women. In other words, there is a tendency in the Kurdish feminist discourse to homogenize Turkish women. While Kurdish feminists accuse Turkish feminists of suppressing their differences, they end up constructing Turkish women as a monolithic group, invoking a similar kind of feminist essentialism.

The traps associated with essentialism have already been discussed in Chapter 2 and noted in Chapter 4 in reference to Turkish feminism. Yet, in this case essentialism proves to be an effective and important strategy for Kurdish feminists to challenge the hegemonic gender discourse of Kemalism and the dominant feminist discourse of the Turkish feminists, exposing their exclusionary and homogenizing character. Turkish

feminists are members of the dominant nation, and thus there are unequal power relations between Turkish and Kurdish feminists.¹⁰¹

As argued in Chapter 2, while the creation of an essentialist identity involves the creation of an “other”, it may also foster a sense of dignity, giving a sense of self-worth to a group of people who has been oppressed by a dominant “other”. Indeed, the adoption of “strategic essentialism” has empowered Kurdish feminists and allowed them to subvert (and even to a certain extent *transform*) both the dominant feminist discourse on “women” and the dominant Kemalist discourse on “nation”. Kurdish feminists, through their activism and discourses, have exposed the ethnic heterogeneity of “Turkish national community” and have made political demands for recognition of their ethnic identities/differences. It is crucial, however, to continually contextualize any strategically essentialized identity in order to prevent it from becoming privileged, normalized or dominant. Both Turkish and Kurdish feminists need to engage in constant self-reflection to be aware of the exclusions generated by the discourses and strategies they adopt. For instance, Kurdish women are not uniformly oppressed and they can have contradictory interests in which tribe, region, class, and sexuality cut across each other. While Kurdish feminists share some of the demands articulated by Turkish feminists, they have specific demands related to their ethnic differences.

¹⁰¹ Interviews with Jiyar and Jujin Kurdish women’s groups, August 7 and August 10, 1999 (respectively), İstanbul and interview with Fatma Kayhan, July 15, 1999, İstanbul.

CHAPTER VI: GENDER AND RELIGION: ACTIVISM AND DISCOURSES OF ISLAMIST WOMEN IN TURKEY

In all Muslim societies, the Islamist movements have gained public visibility by means of the veiling of women. Veiling symbolizes the Islamization of a way of life, and conveys different conceptions of gender identities, spatial organization and aesthetics.

(Göle 1997c: 56)

As we saw in Chapter 4, the Turkish feminist movement exposed the gendered nature of the Kemalist project of modernity and engaged in the redefinition of the identity of women, rejecting the identities imposed on women by Kemalism and the Turkish left. Since the 1990s, however, this very identity has been challenged and deconstructed not only by Kurdish feminists but also by Islamist women. Both Islamist women and Kurdish feminists exposed the exclusionary discourses and practices of secular Turkish feminists by pointing to their stance on such issues as secularism and nationalism.¹

This chapter focuses on the discourses and activism of Islamist women and the challenges they posed to Kemalism, Turkish feminism and political Islam. I pay particular attention to such issues as women's role in public and private spheres, motherhood, family, veiling, sexuality, secularism, Islam, nationalism, Kemalism and the state. Here again, the argument is based mainly on surveys of newspapers, the pamphlets, documents, and periodicals published by Islamist women. Like Turkish and Kurdish

¹ It is important to note that neither Islamist women nor Kurdish feminists constitute a monolithic group. Even a cursory look inside their discourses shows that there are differences within each group. Yet, despite these differences, group members share a common understanding of their oppression, their "oppressors" and are connected through their common struggle against those who subordinate them.

feminists, Islamist women have articulated and communicated their messages through journals. In this chapter, I interpret Islamist women's discourses as articulated in Islamist women's journals, such as the monthly *Kadın Kimliği*, and the writings published by Islamist women in Turkish newspapers and journals. As noted in the Introduction, I was not able to interview Islamist women. The women I contacted informed me of their decision to not be a part of any academic inquiry.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the rise of an Islamist movement in the 1980s, which has challenged the secular identity of the Republic. The second section focuses on the emergence of the *türban* movement in mid-1980s in Turkey when covered Islamist women became visible in the public sphere as active participants in the Islamist movement. The third section discusses the challenges Islamist women posed to Turkish feminism while the last section focuses on the criticisms levelled against political Islam by some Islamist women, who raised questions about the roles Islamist men attributed to them. This chapter concludes by looking the ways Kemalist, radical and socialist feminists responded to the charges of Islamist women.

1. Challenges to the Secular Identity of the Republic: the rise of Political Islam and the Kemalist-Islamist polarization in Turkey in the post-1980 Era

With the adoption of the 1961 Constitution, which included substantial protections for democracy, freedom of expression and association, Turkey witnessed the emergence of numerous civil associations, student organizations, trade unions, interest groups, and associations of engineers, which became increasingly politicized by left- and right-wing

politics. The leftist activism, increasingly visible in the 1960s and the 1970s, was countered by the formation of new right-wing organizations to “combat communism”. For some of these, Islam represented the most effective antidote (Ahmad 1993: 142). In 1969, an Islamist party, the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi – MNP*), was established. The “overpoliticization” of civil society sparked the second military intervention on March 12, 1971. The military-backed regime arrested workers, students, young academics and leftist intellectuals, and banned the Turkish Workers’ Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi – TİP*). The pro-Islamist National Order Party was also closed down by the Constitutional Court for violating the constitutional articles of secularism in 1971 (Ahmad 1993: 158). This party was succeeded by the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi – MSP*) in 1972, with which the Republican People’s Party (CHP), led by Bülent Ecevit, formed a coalition government after the 1973 elections.²

The military’s intervention was not successful in stifling either the left or the right. In the 1970s, the extreme ideological polarization between secular left-wing and Islamist and fascist right-wing groups continued in the form of clashes and violence on the streets, as well as political assassinations of left-wing professors and journalists by fascist groups. The unstable and mainly right-wing coalition governments (called “nationalist front”– *milli cephe*) of the 1970s in fact increased tensions between Turks and Kurds and contributed to economic instability, marked by rising external debt and inflation.

The military intervened again on September 12, 1980. The military enjoyed a considerable amount of popular support, with its promise to bring order and stability to

² For more on the National Salvation Party, which was banned after the military intervention of 1980, see Sunar and Toprak (1983).

the country. While the generals argued that the clashes on the streets between left-wing and right-wing (fascist and Islamist) groups and organizations weakened the unity of the country and the nation, for the most part they blamed the leftist groups and aimed to purge society of their ideology and activities. The military regime, which remained in power for three years, sought to depoliticize society by limiting the activities of labour unions and interest associations. It also imposed control over the universities and the media to prevent opposition to the implementation of the neo-liberal market reforms, imposed by the IMF (Birtek and Toprak 1993; Öniş 1997: 749-750).³

At the same time, the military adopted what is known as the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” (*Türk-İslam sentezi*) to curb any potential source of instability⁴ and to restore the hegemony of Kemalism. Islam was perceived by the military as means to unify the divided nation and to foster national unity and political stability. Thus, the military regime loosened the control over religious groups. Under the military regime, religious courses in elementary and secondary schools became compulsory. The hope was that instilling Islamic Turkish values in the next generation would help avoid the re-

³ While Prime Minister Ecevit made some concessions to meet IMF demands for austerity, the IMF proposed austerity measures were fully introduced by Prime Minister Demirel, who appointed Turgut Özal as his main economic adviser. The so-called “24th January Measures” were introduced on January 24, 1980 with the aim of decreasing state intervention into the economy and creating a new economy based on export-led growth. Öniş (1997: 752), however, argues that the neoliberal state in Turkey “exhibits a dual face ... At one level, it is a major player in the economic area and a major allocator of economic rents ... The retreat of the state from the economy is, therefore, a myth. At another level, however, associated with the politicisation of rent distribution is a loss of confidence and a decline in the moral authority of the state in Turkey”.

⁴ The leftist activism was seen as the main source of disorder and conflict in society by the military. The military also identified the rising Kurdish nationalism as a divisive and destructive force that threatened the indivisible unity of the state. As noted in the previous chapter, in order to curb Kurdish nationalism, the military introduced the Language Law of 2932 in 1983 which banned the use of any language as a mother tongue other than Turkish.

emergence of ideologically opposing factions and conflicts in society. The introduction of mandatory religious education marked a departure from the longstanding secularism of the Republic. The adoption of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis pointed to a transformation of the state ideology (Birtek and Toprak 1993). The radical secularism of the Republic, which aimed to construct solidarity around “progress, secularism, and reason”, was replaced by “neo-republicanism”, based on “traditionalism, religious accommodation, and a sense of moral community” (1993: 195-6).

In the November 1983 elections, the new center-right Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi – ANAP*), led by Turgut Özal, emerged as the party capable of forming a majority government.⁵ Under Özal, ANAP attempted to synthesize economic liberalism and Muslim identity (Göle 1996b).⁶ The liberalization of the economy continued during the next ten years (1983-1993) the ANAP was in power. At the same time, the number of secondary religious schools, *imam hatips*, as well as number of private Koran courses and schools increased. Religious groups, especially religious brotherhoods (*tarikats*), banned by the Kemalist elite in the early years of the Republic, were allowed to increase their

⁵ The 1980 military coup banned the pre-1980 political parties, including the center-right Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi – AP*), the center-left Republican People’s Party (CHP) and the pro-Islamist National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi – MSP*). After the referendum of 1987, the ban imposed by the military on the leaders of these parties was lifted. The leaders returned to political arena by establishing new parties: Süleyman Demirel founded the center-right True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi – DYP*) and Bülent Ecevit the center-left Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti – DSP*), while the pro-Islamist MSP re-established itself as the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi – RP*) under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan.

⁶ ANAP claimed to combine the different tendencies that existed in Turkish society. The Party appealed to religiosity and urban lower and middle classes with conservative background, the small entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and young professionals. After Özal became president in 1989, Mesut Yılmaz, who represented the liberal faction within the party, became the leader of the party. Under the leadership of Yılmaz, the Motherland Party opted for a more statist, nationalist and secularist politics.

activities in the public sphere. These *tarikats* started to attract followers especially among migrants from rural areas.⁷ Indeed, a member of a *tarikat* himself, Özal represented a new identity, defining himself as both “a Muslim and modern” (Göle 1996b). In the 1990s Islamist newspapers, journals, books and television channels proliferated. The Islamist movement had effectively challenged the existing homogeneous and secular public sphere, creating a new Islamist public sphere.

At the same time, neoliberal economic policies, which resulted in disparities in income among social classes, high inflation rates and inequalities in different regions of the country, contributing to a mass migration to the urban centers in the 1980s and 1990s. These migrants played an important role in the success of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi – RP*), first in the 1994 local elections and then in 1995 general elections.⁸ In the local elections of 1994, the RP won the 19.1% of the votes, enabling it to seize the management of municipalities of Ankara and İstanbul, the two largest cities in Turkey. In the 1995 general elections, the RP emerged as the largest party, winning 21.4% of the vote. The RP formed a coalition government with the center-right DYP (True Path Party), led by Tansu Çiller. The RP’s election campaigns had raised such issues as poverty,

⁷ In the 1990s Fethullah Gülen emerged as the leader of the *Nurcu Tarikat*, which aimed to disseminate Islam through education. Gülen established private schools in Turkey and also in emerging ex-Soviet Turkic Muslim countries in Central Asia. Also, the Gülen movement used the electronic and the print media to promote Gülen’s views; in addition to the daily *Zaman* and several Turkish and English-language journals, the movement launched the television channel *Samanyolu*. Gülen established close relations with the leaders of the major center-right political parties Turgut Özal, Süleyman Demirel, Tansu Çiller. For more on Fethullah Gülen’s “Neo-Nur Movement”, his views on secularism, nationalism and the role of Islam in state and society see Yavuz (2003: 179-205).

⁸ Öniş (1997: 757) argues that the fragmentation of both the center right and center left in Turkey “helped to advance the electoral fortunes of the Welfare Party in the 1990s”.

headscarf issue and justice. More broadly, the Party pledged to fight against corruption and to achieve a moral and “Just Order” (*Adil Düzen*).

Once in power, the RP articulated an alternative to the West-oriented Kemalist vision of modernity and political community – one based mainly on religion. While the Kemalist elite sought continuity with the pre-Islamic Turkish past, discarding the Islamic Ottoman history, the RP and other Islamist groups in society sought continuity with the Islamic Ottoman heritage to promote an Islamic order.⁹ The Ottoman past, especially the *millet system*, was invoked as a proof of Islamic tolerance and multiculturalism.¹⁰ In identifying culture with the Ottoman heritage, the Islamist movement has thus constructed an alternative narrative, contesting the modernity espoused by the secular establishment. With the Islamization of the public sphere, especially the visibility of covered women, issues such as Turkishness or national identity, authenticity and secularism came to dominate debate (Navaro-Yashin 2002). The secular Republican and Islamist public spheres have become battlegrounds where secularists with their

⁹ For instance, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (currently the Prime Minister of Turkey), elected as the Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality of İstanbul, in his speeches often referred to the glorious Islamic Ottoman past of Turks (see Bartu (1999) and Bora (1999)). The Islamist movement is not homogeneous and there is no unified position on the kind of an Islamic order should be promoted and how such an order should be achieved. While some segments view the Islamic order as resulting from the establishment of the Islamic law (*Şeriat*) through violent means, others understand it as an ethical or moral framework which should be attained through non-violence. Today, the governing pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party do not refer to the “Islamic order”. For a discussion of the differences among Islamists see Tuğal (2002). While the Islamist movement is not monolithic, it seems to have a rather unified position on the proper gender roles, identities, and relations and on feminism, which is discussed in this chapter.

¹⁰ As argued earlier, while under the *millet system* religious communities were granted autonomy, it was done so on the understanding that the Muslim *millet* was the ruling *millet* and thus superior than non-Muslim *millets*. Also, *millets* were strictly segregated from one another. Due to the limited level of interaction between the *millets*, it is difficult to treat the *millet system* as a genuine model of multiculturalism in Muslim societies.

paraphernalia (such as Atatürk pins) have engaged symbolically in a fight against the potent Islamist symbol, the *türban*.¹¹

The Islamist vision has also involved the paradox of reconciling populism to target the poor with the needs and desires of an Islamic middle and upper class (White 2002). While the RP's economic base consisted of the entrepreneurs and businessmen of small scale enterprises, who traditionally supported Islamist parties, it also reached out to include the growing numbers of "Muslim capitalists". The alternative vision of Islamist modernity, espoused by the Islamist movement is, thus, an amalgam of Islamist, Ottoman, capitalist, and also Western elements.

The democratic process was once again interrupted in 1997 by what the Turkish media referred to as "the postmodern coup" or as "the February 28 Process". This intervention differed from earlier military coups, as it did not involve imprisonments or the closure of political parties and the parliament. During the military-dominated National Security Council (NSC) meeting of February 28, 1997, the military presented the RP-DYP coalition government, led by Prime Minister Erbakan of the RP, with files containing information on what the military saw as the increasing Islamist reactionism (*irtica*), along with a list of measures designed to curb such activism (for details see Cizre and Çınar 2003). Under pressure both from the military and the civilian secular establishment, Prime Minister Erbakan resigned and the coalition government collapsed.¹² A new coalition government of three secularist political parties was formed.

¹¹ Navaro-Yashin (2002) draws attention to the fact that both secularists and Islamists are implicated in the same capitalist consumption market. She discusses how secular and Islamist identities/lifestyles are being expressed through the medium of consumer goods.

¹² For an excellent discussion of "the February 28 Process", its implications for democratic politics, secularism and Islamist politics in Turkey see Cizre and Çınar 2003.

The RP was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1998 because of its anti-secular activities. In 2001 the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi – FP*), which had succeeded the RP, was also shut down.

Rejecting the Islamist label, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP*), formed by the reformists within the FP, defines itself as a conservative democratic (*muhafazakâr demokrat*) party.¹³ The AKP won a parliamentary majority in the November 2002 general elections.¹⁴ Despite its claims, the Turkish military and the secular civilian establishment fear that the AKP has a hidden agenda of Islamist politics and that it may try to undermine the foundations of the pro-Western secular regime by introducing religious tenets in politics and law. In other words, the AKP government could use democracy to implement an Islamic state. Thus far, however, the AKP government, led by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan¹⁵, has maintained Turkey's pro-Western stance and has worked to meet the EU guidelines for membership talks to start between the EU and Turkey.¹⁶ As Cizre and Çınar argues,

The AKP's moderation does not mean that it will not bring religious issues to the political arena ... it aims to raise the issue of ban on the wearing of the headscarves in educational institutions in the political arena as a matter of basic rights, but not as an issue of religion or religiosity. The AKP cites its attempt to address itself to a broader public while taking up the issues related to public visibility of Islamic identity as evidence of its will to

¹³ The conservative wing of the FP established *Saadet Partisi* (the Felicity Party) led by Recai Kutan, one of the closest aids of Erbakan.

¹⁴ For November 2002 election and its implications for Turkish politics see Öniş and Keyman (2003) and Özel (2003).

¹⁵ Erdoğan was convicted of “inciting religious hatred” in 1998 when he recited a poem by Ziya Gökalp which read “The mosques are our barracks, the minarets are our bayonets”. He served four months in prison in 1999. For more on this see İnel (2003).

¹⁶ As noted in Chapter 5, the AKP government has introduced to the Parliament a series of “harmonization law packages” to meet the political criteria for accession to the EU.

reconcile secularism and Islam through a pluralist public sphere in Turkey (2003: 327).

Indeed, since the “postmodern coup” of February 28, Islamist political parties, groups and organizations have refrained from making their demands on the basis of a “Muslim identity”. Instead, they refer to democracy and the human rights framework while articulating their demands.

In sum, since the 1980s the Islamist movement and Islamist parties became the major political actors in the Turkish political scene. While the Islamist parties of the 1970s had a rural constituency and appealed to traditional religiosity, in the 1990s first the RP and then its successors were transformed into political parties that appealed more to the urban middle and upper classes as well as urban poor, especially migrants living in squatter settlements (*gecekondus*). As we shall see, covered Islamist women have played a significant role in the electoral successes of the Islamist parties. They have also used the political opportunity structure created by the 1980 military intervention, which curbed leftist activism while adopting “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” as a state policy, and by the subsequent rise of Islamist movements, in order to formulate their demands and make them public. In particular, the demand to attend universities in Islamic attire raised public awareness of the existence of a strong Islamist movement, alarming both the secular establishment and the secular segments of the population, especially Kemalist feminists.

2. *The Türban Movement and the Activism of Islamist Women*

Covered Islamist women became visible in the public sphere in the 1980s as active participants in the Islamist movement(s).¹⁷ They demanded the right to attend universities wearing the *türban* (headscarf). This demand was perceived by the Kemalist secular elites as a direct threat to the foundations of the Kemalist regime (Göle 1996).¹⁸ In Turkey, people have been allowed to take part in the public sphere as equal, modern, secular citizens but they must leave behind their particularistic, religious, ethnic, and gender identities. Moreover, the Republican public sphere has been not only secular, but also gendered since it has been constructed through the visibility of modern, educated and unveiled Turkish women (Göle 1997b). As constructed by the Kemalist elites, the Republican public sphere does not recognize women wearing headscarves as legitimate actors participating in public life.

As with the Turkish feminist movement, political opportunities and the availability and mobilization of resources have played an important role in the development of Islamist women's activism and discourses and their increasing visibility in the public sphere. The military coup of September 12, 1980, which crushed the Turkish left, had created a space for the feminist movement to emerge. At the same time, this same political opportunity structure enabled the rise and development of a vibrant

¹⁷ For an analysis of "the veiling movement" in post-1980 Turkey, see Göle (1996) and Aktaş (1992). For analyses of Islamist women's discourses and their identity also see Aktaş (1988); İlyasoğlu (1994, 1998); Alankuş-Kural (1997); and Göle (1997a, 1997b, 1997c).

¹⁸ Focusing on the veiling movement of university students in post-1980s Turkey, Göle argues that the veiling movement in particular and the revival of Islamist movements in general do not signify a total rejection of modernity, as often interpreted, because these movements simultaneously accept and reject modernity.

Islamist movement in Turkey. Islamist women have been active and visible participants of this movement.

The *türban* issue first caught the public's attention in July 1984 when four female students were suspended from Uludağ University (located in Western Marmara region) for attempting to write their examinations while wearing headscarves.¹⁹ In October 1986, Islamist women demonstrated against the ban in Ankara. In March 1989, when the Constitutional Court ruled against allowing the *türban*, stating that it was a political symbol, Islamist women and men organized mass demonstrations over the issue in major cities. Further *türban* demonstrations followed in İstanbul and Ankara before the Higher Education Bill, published in December 1989, allowed universities to make their own regulations on whether or not women should be allowed to cover their heads in class. While some universities strictly implemented the ban, others were more accommodating towards the covered students (for details see Özdalga 1998: 39-49). Two students took their cases to the European Human Rights Commission when their university refused to prepare their diplomas with photos with the *türban*. The European Human Rights Commission rejected the case (Arat 2001).

The ban on the *türban* not only affected covered female students but also applied to female bureaucrats, and professionals (like physicians, teachers, lawyers, nurses, academicians) as they were not allowed to work in public institutions, including state hospitals, while wearing headscarves. When the RP won control of major cities like

¹⁹ In 1982, the Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu – YÖK*) banned the wearing of headscarves by female students at universities but the ban was not strictly implemented.

Ankara and İstanbul in 1994, it allowed women employees of these municipalities to wear the *türban* at work.

In Kemalist Turkey, wearing a headscarf was (and still is) associated with backwardness – something worn by village and migrant women. Even when village and migrant women wore headscarves, however, they had not tried to “hide the hair, and edges of scarves are not long enough to cover the bosom” (İlyasoğlu 1998: 244). The new veiling or covering (*tesettür*) is different in the sense it is based on the Islamic dress code for women, which “requires the complete concealing of the hair, the bosom, the arms, the legs and the curvatures of the body” (*ibid.*)²⁰ The new headscarf *türban* is different from the traditional headscarf (*başörtüsü*) also in terms of what it or represents.²¹ As Göle argues,

In its contemporary form veiling conveys a political statement of Islamism in general and an affirmation of Muslim women’s identity in particular. In this respect it is distinct from the traditional Muslim woman’s use of the headscarf. While the latter is confined within the boundaries of traditions, handed down from generation to generation and passively adopted by women, the former is an active reappropriation by women that shifts from traditional to modern realms of life and conveys a political statement.

... Contrary to the traditional practice of Islamic veiling, or the Islamic headscarf, which conveys a specific meaning – that is – “the return to

²⁰ The usage of the term *veil* is misleading as there are only a few Islamist women who literally cover their faces with veils in Turkey. The *türban* leaves the face uncovered.

²¹ Recent studies on Muslim women criticize and reject the conventional views on the relationship between Islam and women (Lazreg 1990a; Kandiyoti 1991b; Hessini 1994; Göle 1996). These studies argue that views, which treat Islam as intrinsically patriarchal and hostile to women’s rights, fail to account for the variations encountered in women’s status both within and across Muslim societies. As they adopt an essentialist and ahistorical approach, they take Islam out of its historical and political context, viewing covered women either as “subsidiary militants” of fundamentalist movements or as passive transmitters of the traditional values. Such analyses ignore the questions of agency and the formation of an “Islamic self” (see Göle 1996, 1997a).

traditions”, “return to fundamentalism”, “subservience of women” – and suggests binary oppositions such as “Islam is essentially different from the West”, and “Westernization is a condition of women’s emancipation”, the label of “turban” represents the hybrid and transgressive nature of Islamism in general and women’s participation in the Islamist movement in particular (1996a: 4, 6).

Thus, for Göle, the new veiling signifies “the active voluntary reappropriation of an Islamist identity by women” (1997c: 56-57). Indeed, young women, mostly educated in secular schools, voluntarily decided to cover themselves (Göle 1996a: 90). The majority of Islamist girls and women, who wear the *türban*, have lower or lower-middle class backgrounds. While most of them come from small Anatolian cities, some are also from İstanbul and Ankara (Acar 1995: 54-55; Göle 1996a: 88-89). These women are young, urban, educated, and politically active. Thus, they challenge the image of traditional Muslim women as illiterate, uneducated, passive, and subjugated (Göle 1996a, 1997c; Hessini 1994).

Moreover, turning to the religious sources and “the Golden Age of Islam” (the time of the Prophet and the four caliphs), these women question the traditional interpretations of Islam and how it is practiced by their parents, relatives or traditional believers (Hessini 1994: 49). As Göle argues (1996a: 91), “[u]nlike the ‘ignorant’ masses, who experience traditional Islam on the basis of ‘hearsay’ they perceive themselves as ‘enlightened’ and ‘intellectual’ people”.²² Islamist women argue that

²² On the pages of their journals, Islamist women argue that most women do not know the rights given to them by Islam. They argue that in Islam a mother’s main duty is to raise and educate her children but she does not have to breastfeed them. If a woman refuses to breastfeed her baby, her husband has to find a wet nurse. Islamist women argue that most women are not aware of this right. Also, on the issue of polygamy, which will be discussed later in the chapter, they argue that polygamy is not a religious duty that needs to be performed (see Barbarosoğlu 1997).

women are not aware of the rights given to them by Islam (Nuroğlu 1996; Sancar 1996). Thus, some of these women work within organizations and parties with a mission to teach women “true” Islam so that they become aware of their (God-given) rights.

Recent studies of the relationship between women, Islam and Islamist movements confirm the arguments presented by Göle (see Hessini 1994; Lazreg 1990b). Leila Hessini’s study on “the reveiling movement” in Morocco shows how it reflects a conscious choice: urban, educated, professional Moroccan women *choose* to wear the hijab (Hessini 1994: 41-42). For some women the hijab “provides physical and emotional security as well as a sense of group identity and self-worth” (*ibid.* 1994: 54). Others wear the hijab because it increases their mobility and also strengthens the public moral code. The hijab can be viewed as an attempt to recover cultural authenticity for post-colonial women oppressed for decades under colonialism. According to Hessini,

Women in hijab are looking for an Islamic identity in tune with their heritage and devoid of Western materialism and values. In essence, they are requesting a revised, more genuine practice of Islam, one based on indigenous cultural norms, as well as on the values inherent in Islam (*ibid.*).

Göle and Hessini view the emergence of the veiling movements as a part of a widespread movement toward Islamic authenticity. Contrary to the widespread belief that veiling confines and restricts women, they argue that the new covering might be “a liberating force” for some women. The hijab gives women freedom because “women who wear the hijab are liberated from parental apprehension and free to enter areas they might avoid if unprotected (i.e.) unveiled” (Hessini 1994: 54). Göle similarly argues that the new covering facilitates their access to the public domain as Muslim women. These

studies reject the existing stereotypes of Middle Eastern women as passive, subjugated, backward, submissive and uneducated, showing that it is often educated and assertive women who wear the veil.

As Göle argues, the contemporary actors of Islamism are university students, intellectuals, and professionals (doctors, pharmacists, engineers, lawyers) (1996a: 96, 1997c). In fact, she argues that educated Islamist women, who are professionals and intellectuals, constitute one of the three categories of “the Islamist counter-elites”, the other two being the engineers and the intellectuals, who have “social and cultural capital” that put them in positions of prominence within the Islamist circles. For Göle, the Islamist counter-elites play a significant role within the Islamist movement by

countervail[ing] the totalitarian tendency of the movement. Engineers embody the conflictual tension between rationality and faith; intellectual reflect that between critical thinking and Islamic morality; and veiled women express the tension between communitarian morality and individualism (1997c: 58).

Throughout the 1990s covered women continued to protest the ban on *türban* organizing petition campaigns and through hunger strikes. The *türban* question continues to be one of the most hotly debated issues on the Turkish political agenda. Islamist women and men have recently started to discuss the issue within the framework of democratic rights, referring to the 1982 Constitution which guarantees freedom of religious expression and protects both men’s and women’s right to education (Arat 2001). For secularists, however, wearing the *türban* is much more than an expression of individual choice or an exercise of a civil right. It represents the rising threat of Islamist

fundamentalism, and as such, its public visibility is the part and parcel of the Islamist fundamentalist agenda to undermine the Kemalist principle of secularism.

Apart from participating in demonstrations protesting the ban on *türban*, Islamist women played an important role in the RP's success in the 1994 local elections, by going door to door, especially in squatter settlements (*gecekondu*) to secure votes, especially of women.²³ While Turkish feminists distanced themselves from political parties, Islamist women have been working within, or closely with, Islamist political parties. Yet, although they campaigned for the RP, Sibel Eraslan in İstanbul and few other women in Ankara were denied positions in their parties and were not on the party candidate lists in the 1995 general elections as such places were reserved for men.

Islamist women have also established various women's organizations such as *Hanımlar Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı* (the Educational and Cultural Society of Ladies) and *Gökkuşluğu İstanbul Kadın Platformu* (Rainbow İstanbul Women's Platform). Some of these organizations are charity organizations. Others organize panels on women's rights and duties in Islam and in the family. A few members of the Rainbow İstanbul Women's Platform also participated in the Fourth UN Women's Conference in Beijing (see Şişman 1996).

Islamist women's groups also publish women's journals such as *Mektup*, *Kadın ve Aile*, *Yeni Bizim Aile*, *Mektup*, *Sena* and *Kadın Kimliği*.²⁴ While the first three began

²³ For an analysis of the discourses of Islamist women who were active in the Islamist Welfare Party see Arat's study of the party's Ladies' Commission (*Refah Partisi Hanım Komisyonları*) (1999). Also see Sibel Eraslan's (2000) (one of well-known activists who was the former chair of the Ladies' Commission) account of the experiences of the covered women in the RP.

²⁴ For a comparative analysis of Islamist women's periodicals see Demir 1998. For analyses of individual journals see Acar (1995), Arat (1995), and Alankuş-Kural (1997).

publication in the mid 1980s, *Sena* and *Kadın Kimliği* were published in the mid 1990s. Through these journals Islamist women's groups both convey their messages and reconstruct their identity, engaging in debate with other women's groups over the issues of women's rights and roles. Islamist women concentrate mostly on the issues of self-definition and the role of women in public and private life. The establishment of various Islamist women's organizations and Islamist women's journals show Islamist women's intention to have a voice of their own, if not to achieve an individual identity (Alankuş-Kural 1997; İlyasoğlu 1994; Göle 1997a, 1997c).

3. Discourses of Islamist Women: Challenges of Islamist women to the "West-centered" Turkish feminism

What kinds of discourses do Islamist women articulate? What do they demand? Does their discourse intersect with those of the other women's groups? What public and private identities do they propose as alternatives to the Kemalist, traditional Islamist and feminist representations of women? How do Islamist women reconstruct their identity? As argued in Chapter 2, an identity is defined with respect to a creation of a devalued "other". Within the current Islamist women's discourses, feminists and secular Kemalist women/feminists are devalued as "others". Islamist women distinguish themselves from the unveiled "modern Turkish woman", constructed by the Kemalist elite. They are different from unveiled, secular Kemalist women and feminists who reject Islamic norms and values (or, at least, view religion as a "private" matter, leaving their religious identity in the private sphere when they enter the public sphere). Islamist women also differentiate themselves from traditional Muslim women who do not wear the *türban* in

accordance with the Islamic dress code. Traditional Muslim women are passive followers of traditional interpretations of Islam without fully understanding what Islam requires from them. Islamist women are enlightened women, who know how to cover themselves properly and act in accordance with Islamic norms and rules of conduct. Yet, they also challenge traditional interpretations of Islam (Aktaş 1988).²⁵

Islamist women have accused both Kemalist women and feminists of being Westernized, elitist upper-class women, challenging their claim to speak for the masses of Turkish women. Just as the Islamist *Refah Partisi* (RP) claimed to represent the “real Turkey”, Islamist women have claimed to represent the “real women” of Turkey – women from rural areas, migrant women of squatter settlements (*gecekondus*), women with low-middle class or lower-class backgrounds and with less education. Thus, Islamist women view themselves as the “real” representatives of Turkish Muslim women while Turkish feminists and Kemalist women are seen as corrupted by Western influences.²⁶

For instance, an Islamist woman criticized the Turkish Women’s Union for not recognizing “the real women of Turkey” and for only “helping their own types” (Uyar 1995). A group of Islamist women (see Kurter *et al.* 1988: 26, translation mine) sent a

²⁵ Also, the term “Muslim” is different from “Islamist” in the sense that the former “expresses a religious identity” and the latter implies “a political consciousness and social action” (Göle 1997c: 47).

²⁶ They criticize feminists for advocating sexual freedom – that is having sexual relations with men before marriage and sexual relations with more than one partner out of marriage. They accuse feminists of immorality (Aksu and Tezcan 1996). They argue that feminists are trying to be like Western women, turning their backs to their moral values and culture and ending up being immoral. For them, wearing the *türban* is a sign of modesty, chastity and morality. Thus, not only feminists and secular Kemalist women but also women who do not cover their heads are accused of being immoral. This assessment is based on a survey of Islamist women’s periodicals, especially *Kadın Kimliği*.

letter to the feminist journal *Sosyalist Feminist Kaktüs*, criticizing feminists for ignoring differences among women,

You [feminists] question the prevailing images of woman and contest the identity of woman, an identity which is constructed for women by the capitalist-male-dominated ideology; yet you want to replace this with a new, **homogeneous, unitary** image of woman constructed by **yourselves...** [You say] yes to women's liberation, only if its course and style are determined by you.

A prominent covered Islamist woman went so far as to argue that there is no “woman question” in Islam (Şenler 1995a: 3). The “woman question” is seen to be a Western creation – implying the superiority of the Islamic order over the West.

While feminists identify men and male-dominated institutions (state, family, law etc) as the main culprit, Islamist women (and men) point to the degeneration and decline of Islamic moral values, traditions and the family, resulting from long years of imposed secularization and modernization by the state, capitalism and the cultural hegemony of the West (Gök 1995; Ceylan 1995). The ban on *türban* symbolizes this imposed secularization and the exclusion of Muslims and Muslim identity from the public sphere. For the Islamist women, then, the secular establishment (the state and the elites) are seen as the oppressors. Under Western influences, Turks have lost their Islamic values, traditions and identities. Under capitalism, women's bodies, sexuality and beauty became commodified (Özkan 1998) and women, especially young girls, became more individualistic, materialist and consumerist.²⁷ Islamist women argue that, while feminists

²⁷ Islamist intellectuals and women draw from the Turkish left's critique of Western economic imperialism, focusing more on Western cultural imperialism.

have been fighting for women's liberation, they have actually lost control over their bodies:

They [feminists] thought that they gained their freedom but they could not even own their own bodies. When they said "Isn't this my body? I behave however I want to, I get naked [if I want to]", they helped men earn money; they were exploited. They lost both their personality and femininity within this capitalist system (Özkan 1998: 4).

Islamist women are critical of liberal feminism's insistence on *equality* between the sexes. For them, this leads to hostility among sexes and inevitably to disorder. They argue that due to their different biological make up, men and women carry out different social functions, and this generates harmony in society. Conflicts arise when women push the boundaries of their identity which is determined by their biological nature and prescribed by Islam. The relationship between men and women, then, can be best understood in terms of difference and *complementarity* rather than *equality*. Women and men are equal to each other only before God. Both Islamist men and women writers underline women's primary role as that of reproducers and nurturers and men's role as providers for the family (see Karataş 1995; Özsoy 1996; Beşoğlu 1996; Aksu and Tezcan 1996).

Thus while Islamist women have challenged the Kemalist and feminist claims made on behalf of "women", they have also constructed another monolithic identity, an essentialized notion of "womanhood", that is stressing the different – feminine – nature of women. They base their arguments on the inevitability and naturalness of the roles of women as mothers and wives. While feminists view the family as a patriarchal institution that oppresses women, Islamist women view the family as the basis of a "healthy"

society. Consequently, Islamist women (and men) put a heavy emphasis on women's roles as mothers (see for example Beşer 1996, Cengiz 1995). Yet, the form of motherhood emphasized by Islamist men and women is not traditional one: it requires educated mothers, better informed to raise and shape the next generation of members of the Islamic community (İnal 1995: 23, Cengiz 1995). Women are viewed as educators of children and transmitters of proper Islamic principles. Thus, women's traditional roles within the family have been redefined and given political significance.

More specifically, Islamist women are not unanimous in their view of women's education and work outside home. While some Islamist women promote a conservative position, others demand a more public role for Muslim women. The more conservative Islamist women argue that women should be educated in order to be good mothers. Education is to be used for the good of the community (see for instance Nuroğlu 1996). For others, women have the right to work outside as long as they do not neglect their primary duties as mothers and wives (İnal 1995). Still others argue that women can work only to help the family budget, that is if she has to work (Karaman 1996, Emiroğlu 1996).

While some Islamist women want to stay home and take care of their children, the majority of women with higher education want to work and continue working after getting married and having children. These women treat women's education and employment as aspects of women's presence in the public sphere. Often making references to the Koranic verses and practices of the early days of Islam (*Asr-ı Saadet*), they claim that the woman's role is not restricted to motherhood and maintaining the family, but it encompasses all social life within and outside the home (see Karakoç 1996a, 1998). They argue for women's right to education and encourage women to take

action in defence of women's right to wear headscarves in schools and public-sector employment. Islamist women also criticize Islamist men who confine women to the private realm of domesticity. In one of the articles in the Islamist women's journal *Kadın Kimliği*, the editorial staff of *Zaman*, an Islamic daily, is criticized for not hiring female journalists (Karakoç 1996b).

As far as women's political rights are concerned, some Islamist women argue that due to their nature, women cannot and should not get involved in politics (Şenler 1995b).²⁸ Women can protect and promote their rights through journals and other publications without being used as pawns in struggles to appropriate power (*ibid.*). Other Islamist women argue that women should participate in politics and decision-making mechanisms. They stress the *different*, feminine nature of women, but also demand to participate in all spheres of life on an *equal* basis with other actors. Thus, some Islamist women supported Merve Kavakçı, a covered woman who tried to take an oath while wearing a *türban* after she was elected as a member of the Parliament on the Islamist *Fazilet Partisi* (FP) ticket in the April 1999 elections (Karakoç 1999).

Kavakçı was jeered at by the social democrat and secular male and female MPs, who shouted "Turkey is and will remain secular" and "all Merves go to Iran", when she entered the Parliament wearing the *türban* (Göçek 1999: 522). She was forced to leave the Parliament without taking her oath. She stirred a serious controversy in Turkey since her action was regarded as a direct attack to the secular regime. The secular media began

²⁸ It is important to note that the Islamist RP did not put a single woman on the list of candidates announced for the 1995 general election. This came as a shock to many Islamist women activists who were behind the success of the RP's ascendancy in the local elections in 1994. After the general elections, Sibel Eraslan, the chair of Ladies' Commission of the RP, resigned from her position.

to investigate her life and found out that she had ties with some Islamist associations (like the Palestinian Hamas) and that she was an American citizen.²⁹ Because she failed to notify the Turkish authorities that she had become an American citizen, Kavakçı was stripped off her Turkish citizenship and thus lost her status as an MP.³⁰

Her party, Islamist newspapers, Islamist men and women (through demonstrations) supported Kavakçı's decision to enter the Parliament wearing a headscarf. Both Kavakçı and the FP framed her action as a personal decision made to exercise her civil rights. Indeed, at a press conference, Kavakçı stated that her protest was "similar to what the blacks went through during the civil rights movement in the United States" and that she was "a daughter of the (Turkish) republic representing a persecuted populace" (both translated and cited in Göçek 1999: 524).

Another covered woman, Nesrin Ünal of the right-wing Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi – MHP*), was also elected as a member of parliament. She took off her *türban* for the session to be sworn in with the other MPs.³¹ After the ceremony, she attended the party meeting at the Assembly and even visited Atatürk's tomb wearing her headscarf. Ünal explained that as she respected the traditions and the dress code of the National Assembly, she decided to abide by them. While Kavakçı pointed to "the significance of legal rights in making her choice, Ünal emphasize[d] the importance of the sacredness of the state in her decision to uncover" (Göçek 1999: 524). As Göçek rightly argues, the headscarf was unacceptable in the Assembly not because of

²⁹ Kavakçı received her degree in computer engineering at the University of Texas in the United States.

³⁰ The current governing party, AKP, has thirteen members in the Parliament and none of them wear the *türban*.

³¹ For an excellent account of the so-called "headscarf incident" see Göçek 1999.

“its impropriety as a mode of dress ... but instead [of] its symbolism of sacredness, a sacredness that contrasted with and often opposed that of the state.”³² As Ünal redefined the public sphere of the Assembly as the private sphere by viewing it as her *sacred home*, she was able to take off her *türban* (Göçek 1999: 530).

The headscarf incident in the Parliament reflects an attempt on the part of the Islamists to redefine the public-private divide in Turkey through the visibility of a covered MP. Kavakçı’s attempt to enter the Parliament – considered a site of modernity – aimed to subvert the Kemalist project of modernity. As argued earlier in the chapter, Islamists denounce the secularist state project of modernity and articulate an alternative vision of

³² During the talk she gave at Carleton University in front of a large student body on November 15, 2000, Merve Kavakçı made constant references to “multiculturalism”, “democracy”, “human rights” and “individual civil rights” while explaining how her rights and the rights of her covered sisters were constantly being violated by the Turkish state. She also showed a video tape documenting the demonstrations of the covered female students in Turkey. While Canadian students asked questions and made comments, expressing their sympathy with her cause, secular Turkish students asked her questions about what she thought about Atatürk and his reforms. One student reminded her why the secular MPs reacted strongly to her appearance in *tesettür* at the Parliament. As other students from Turkey, I was surprised by the presentation made by Kavakçı. Even though I support Islamist women’s right to wear headscarves in the public sphere, I was surprised of the way she framed her talk, in which she did not give any background information (supportive or critical) on the history of the Republic. She did not refer to the broader historical and political context within which the meaning and the significance of the *türban* was embedded and within which “the headscarf incident” took place and gained significance. She also presented her decision to wear the headscarf as an individual choice as if that choice was made in a vacuum divorced of any social, historical, political, gendered meanings, practices and disputes. As Göçek argues (1999: 529, emphasis mine) covering not only symbolizes an *individual* choice but also “the expression of *communal* belief and practice”. Also, she did not talk about the political stance of her party (the FP), which had an anti-Western and anti-EU stance at the time. When I asked her why she was taking the Western human rights framework (she referred to European Human Rights Commission repeatedly) and North American notions of secularism and multiculturalism as reference points to criticize the Republic, while she campaigned on an anti-Western and anti-European Union platform and while her party was critical of Western (especially American) cultural imperialism, she denied that the FP was anti-Western and argued that they wanted to see a more democratic Turkey.

modernity, claiming continuity with the Islamic Ottoman past, re-Islamicizing social relations and cultural practices, and promoting an Islamic order. While some Islamist women prefer an Islamic order or regime, others, like Fatma Barbarosoğlu (1997), argue that they can live in a secular democratic regime as long as they are allowed to wear the *türebans* at universities and in public employment.

Islamist women often avoid discussing issues related to women's beauty and sexuality, and especially the practice of polygamy. Violence against women, especially domestic violence, is recognized and some Islamist women and men recognize the need for Islamic women's shelters (Yüksel 1995, Vakkasoğlu 1995, Hatemi 1998). Yet, most Islamist women and men argue that shelters do not provide solutions to domestic violence against women as they lead to divorces, destroying families. On the issue of divorce, Islamist women argue that a man can divorce his wife only after he gives her warnings. If a man wants to marry another woman, he should do so after obtaining his wife's permission.

Religious marriage and polygamy have been hotly debated between secular and Islamist women and in secularist newspapers and television channels, especially after a sex scandal known as the "Fadime Şahin Incident" in 1997. Fadime Şahin, a young covered, university student, was a follower of a religious sect, led by Müslüm Gündüz, who was critical of Kemalism. Gündüz, who was married, was arrested by the police for committing adultery with Fadime Şahin. He argued that they got married in a religious ceremony so there was nothing illegal between them. In Turkey, however, polygamy is illegal and religious marriages are not recognized by the state. Fadime Şahin, moreover,

appeared on television channels, denying that there was a religious marriage. She also revealed that she was abused by another sect leader.

The secular media and feminists used this incident to argue that innocent young women who wear the *türban* are being deceived and abused by the leaders and male members of the religious orders or sects. Fadime Şahin came to symbolize all young women with *türbans* who have been deceived, victimized and exploited sexually by religious brotherhoods (*tarikats*). A prominent covered woman, Fatma Barbarosoğlu (1997), countered that while polygamy is allowed in Islam, it is not a religious duty. She argued that unless a wife agrees to it or unless it is absolutely necessary, men should stay monogamous. Islamist women argued that polygamy is a practice which is permitted only under certain conditions. If a man wants to have another wife he should have the consent of the first wife. Also, a man can marry more than one woman only if he can provide for all of them.³³ As Göle argues (2000a: 109-110),

Islamist women's associations warned young girls not to accept religious marriages in secret and to secure a civil marriage, the only lawful one, first. ... Surprisingly, civil marriage, imposed by the secularist republican elites in 1926, became an individual choice principally for Islamic women themselves. Islamism, with a surprising twist, helped consolidate the indigenization of modern egalitarian values.

Islamist women have not only concentrated their critiques on Kemalism, secularism and modernity. They have also taken issue with Islamist men. In the process of engaging in political activism and debates over issues relating to women, Islamist

³³ Also, if a man's wife is infertile, he can marry again. If the wife does not approve of this marriage, she can file for a divorce. Men are also permitted to have more than one wife in post-war situations when the number of women would be higher than men.

women have gained agency. They have demanded their right to participate actively in all spheres of life, asserted their difference, and sought recognition and inclusion as legitimate actors in the public sphere. In other words, they have become empowered through Islamist movement(s). Yet, as Göle (1997b: 73) argues

there is a covert tension, a paradox, in this mode of empowerment through Islamism: they [Islamist women] quit traditional life roles, making their personal life a matter of choice, pursuing a professional and/or political career, yet they acquiesce in incarnating the Islamic way of life, Islamic morality, and Islamic community. Thus, Islamism unintentionally engenders the individuation of women while simultaneously restraining it.

In other words, the Islamist movement both encourages and constrains women's agency. Most of the time, Islamist women's discourse and activism take place within the ideological parameters established by Islamism. There are, however, some Islamist women who refuse to submerge their voices in Islamism's collectivist vision (*ibid.* 75-81), and attempt to renegotiate their identities and roles with Islamist men.

4. Islamist women challenge Political Islam: Islamist feminists?

Covered Islamist women have not only posed a challenge to Kemalist principles but also challenged Islamist precepts that would confine women to the private sphere. Indeed, the female university students with headscarves became the most active and *visible* participants in Islamist movement(s) in the late 1980s. They organized sit-ins and mass demonstrations, protesting the ban on the headscarves at universities. They also demanded their rights for higher education and employment and career opportunities. Many Islamist women started to work in municipal institutions, in women's periodicals and Islamist newspapers and make programs on TV and radio. Although Islamist women

take a critical stance against Westernization and claim cultural difference, they also articulate their discourses in dialogue with modernity (Göle 1996a; 1997a, 1997b; İlyasoğlu 1994; Alankuş-Kural 1997). Their claims are based on both equality and women's "difference". They demand not only equal rights, but also the right to be different.

The visibility and activism of Islamist women in the public sphere (protesting, campaigning, publishing journals, establishing organizations) led the secular media in Turkey to call these women *türbanlı feministler* (feminists with türban) (see Göktürk and Çakır 1987). Indeed, some Islamist women agree that there is a patriarchal system which oppresses women. They question the limitations imposed on them by the dictates of Islam and Islamist men and seek to renegotiate their roles and identities.

For example, in the late 1987, some Islamist women engaged in debate with Ali Bulaç, a prominent male Islamist intellectual, on the pages of the Islamist newspaper *Zaman*. Bulaç had criticized feminism as a movement "hostile to men and conducive to homosexuality" (Göle 1996a: 122). Some Islamist women writers responded:³⁴

Yes! Feminism invites women to rebel against the domination of men. In the house, at work, in the street. What's the use of fear from this so much? ... Isn't it possible to leave oppressive attitudes instead of insisting to play with the words? ... We must accept that it is really difficult to give up habits, habits that are so enjoyable (translated and cited in Göle 1996a: 123).

Another Islamist woman, Yıldız Kavuncu, asks:

Why are Muslim men so afraid of the educated and learned women? Because it is easy to dominate, appeal to and subjugate those women who lost contact with the world and are concerned only with the house. Once

³⁴ Within six months after this debate, Islamist women writers lost their jobs in *Zaman*.

women start to better themselves with education and hold a critical eye, they then scare men. The character of a consenting, obedient, and “sleeping beauty” woman is so charming indeed (translated and cited in Göle 1996a: 126).

Following the debate between a few Islamist female writers and Ali Bulaç in *Zaman*, however, most Islamist intellectual and activist women stated that they were not feminists (Gülnoz 1996b; Tuksal 2000b). As Tuksal (2000b) argues, “it requires extraordinary courage for a woman in the Islamic circles to declare that she is influenced by feminism” as she would be accused of betraying the cause of the Islamist movement.

In one of the issues of *Kadın Kimliği*, Mualla Gülnoz (1997) criticized Islamist men, pointing to sexist, male-dominated Muslim marriages. Islamist women need to question and problematize existing patriarchal structures and value systems. Here, her argument clearly intersects with that of feminists. Although Gülnoz does not embrace feminism and views it as an alien, Western ideology, she claims that Islam could benefit from the arguments put forward by feminism. For Gülnoz, blaming feminism for women’s exploitation cannot solve the domestic violence and injustice in Muslim families (see for instance, Göze 1996a). At the same time, Gülnoz is critical of radical feminists who demand “sexual liberation” (see also Gülnoz 1996a).

To take another example, Halime Toros (1997) argues that in the 1990s Islamist women began to raise questions about the roles that Islamist men have attributed to them. Islamist women challenged men who wanted to lock them into the private sphere by rejecting women’s employment outside home. The proliferation of day care centers proves that Islamist women are renegotiating their roles with Islamist men. Islamist women need to question other traditional Islamic practices, especially the practice of

polygamy. For Toros, it is not enough to argue that Islam offers the best solution against women's subordination since in today's Muslim societies reality proves otherwise.

Konca Kuriş, one of the well-known Islamist women, questioned the conventional Islamic interpretation of the women's roles, rights and duties in society, developing a more reformist vision of Islam.³⁵ She was a member of a secular feminist association, the Mersin Independent Women's Association (*Mersin Bağımsız Kadın Derneği*), where she worked for the establishment of a shelter for battered women (*Pazartesi* 2000 (60): 8). Although she wore a headscarf, she argued that women do not have to cover their heads as the Koran only commands women to cover their breasts. She argued that the Koran should be translated into, and read in, Turkish because many people read the Koran or pray without understanding a word of it. She also questioned the belief that women should not fast, pray and touch the Koran while they were menstruating because women during menstruation are considered to be "dirty". She challenged this notion asking how the menstrual blood could be dirty if it feeds the fetus in the womb. Moreover, women should be able to perform the Friday and funeral *namaz* (a praying ritual) side by side with men.

For Kuriş, the Koran is the key text; other religious texts were interpreted and distorted by men, who provided patriarchal explanations of the verses in order to legitimize the oppression of women.³⁶ Kuriş became popular nationwide, appeared on television programs, confronting Islamist men and challenging the patriarchal interpretations of the religious sources. In July 1998, she was kidnapped in front of her

³⁵ For a reinterpretation of Islamic religious texts from an Islamist women's perspective by a female scholar of Islamic theology see Tuksal 2000a.

³⁶ See her letter which was published in *Pazartesi* (March 2000, issue 60) after her death.

home in Mersin and later executed by the Turkish Hizbullah, a radical militant Islamist organization³⁷. In their press statement, the Hizbullah referred to Kuriş as an atheist, an enemy of Islam, an advocate of state secularism who poisoned the Muslims with her beliefs and thus was punished. Kuriş's body was found in 2000 in Konya by the police who were operating against the Hizbullah.

Kuriş's efforts were supported and valued by secular feminists (Turkish and Kurdish)³⁸ and some Islamist women. Secular feminists viewed her as a Muslim feminist, rather than an Islamist feminist, who struggled relentlessly for women's rights. After her death, several articles appeared in the feminist journal *Pazartesi* (see March 2000 issue) as well as in the secularist newspapers.³⁹ Ayşe Düzkan, a radical feminist, declared Kuriş as "the first martyr of feminists" of Turkey (*Milliyet* 30 January 2000). Yaprak Zihnioğlu argued that Kuriş struggled to "feminize Islam" and that she was silenced as a warning to those women would launch similar criticisms against "Islamist patriarchy" (*Pazartesi* 2000 (60): 9). Similarly, Sibel Eraslan, a prominent Islamist woman, argued that Kuriş's execution was a warning directed at covered Islamist activists (*Pazartesi* 2000 (60): 7).

³⁷ Nicole Pope reported that a member of Hizbullah told her in 1992 that "his organization, whose members were mainly Kurdish, aimed to set up an 'Islamic Kurdish independent state'" (2000: 19). There were rumours that the Turkish security forces tolerated Hizbullah in the 1990s in their fight against the PKK, in southeastern Turkey. Both then President Demirel and the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces denied and condemned such allegations – the military stressing that ruthlessness of the Hizbullah proved that the army had been right about the serious threat posed by political Islam (*ibid.*).

³⁸ Kurdish feminists are secular and very critical of political Islam. They do not view Islam and/or religious identity/difference as one of their multiple identities. In Kurdish feminist journals, there were only a few articles on Islam and women (Yaşar 1997). There were a few articles on Konca Kuriş – on her courage, her views and disappearance. Kurdish feminists were supportive of her attempts to expose patriarchal interpretations of Islam (see Nazdar 1999; *Jujin* 2000 (10): 13; *Roza* 1998 (12): 6-9).

³⁹ See for instance columnist Hasan Cemal's article in the daily *Milliyet* (23 January 2000) and columnist Perihan Mağden's article in the daily *Radikal* (29 January 2000).

Conservative Islamist women, like Emine Şenliklioğlu, however, criticized Kuriş for “distorting Islam” and being ignorant of Islamic teachings (see an interview with her in *Pazartesi* 2000 (60): 8).⁴⁰

Some feminists argue that Islamist feminism is possible, pointing to women like Konca Kuriş, while conservative Islamist women reject feminism as an alien ideology and condemn it for leading to the degeneration of women and the decline of the family and communal values:

Another thing that is difficult to understand is the term Muslim feminist. What does feminism have to do with this religion? We need to question this... By adopting the institutions of systems other than Islam Muslims would become foreigners to themselves (see Özkan 1998: 4; translation mine).

Conservative Islamist women’s journals such as *Kadın ve Aile* (Woman and Family) and *Mektup* (Letter) publish articles criticizing feminists for supporting sexual freedom and women’s employment outside home and thus promoting immorality and undermining the family values (Özkan 1998; Aksu and Tezcan 1996). Most Islamist women argue that they support “women’s rights” (*kadın hakları*), which are compatible with Islam (Aksu and Tezcan 1996). Feminism, however, is a foreign ideology and thus must be rejected. It is important to note, however, that while Islamist women are critical of feminists, they also draw on feminist arguments when they criticize Islamist men and promote women’s rights. Because Islamist women situate themselves in relation to feminists and constantly

⁴⁰ Also, see the interview with Yasimen Güleçyüz, the editor of the Islamist women journal *Yeni Bizim Aile* (The New Our Family), where she argued that Konca Kuriş was used “as a tool by the state against Islam” (*Pazartesi* 2000 (60): 7).

seek to differentiate their discourses from theirs, there has not been much communication and constructive dialogue between feminists and Islamist women.⁴¹

The rise of political Islam and the visibility and activism of Islamist women in the public sphere in post-1980 Turkey compelled other women's groups to rethink their priorities and clarify their stance vis-à-vis Kemalism and Islam. Radical and socialist feminists engaged in debates with Islamist women over the headscarf issue. For radical feminists, Islam, whether as a way of life or as an ideology, is male-dominated and it subordinates women by assigning men a superior position. Thus, feminism and Islam are not compatible. Since Islamist women want to fight for their rights alongside men, it is not possible for feminists and Islamist women to join forces in their struggles for women's liberation (Gül 1988).

Along similar lines, socialist feminists argue that Islam, as a religious ideology, is oppressive of women and Islamist women's criticism of male domination contradicts their belief in Islam (Öztürk 1988a). Although they support the right of Islamist women to wear *türban* (Öztürk 1988b), socialist feminists support at least one of the pillars of the Kemalist regime, i.e. secularism (*ibid.*).

On the pages of *Pazartesi* socialist and radical feminists have continued to support the *democratic right* of Islamist women to wear headscarves in the public sphere (Pazartesi 17: 8-9; 22: 10-11; 24: 10; 43: 1-7). They argue that women with headscarves who are not admitted to universities are discriminated, not merely because of their religious belief, but also because they are women. Men who share the same beliefs with women and think that women's headcovering is a dictate of religion are admitted to

⁴¹ Interview with Yaprak Zihnioğlu, August 12, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

universities, because their heads are uncovered. Feminists argued that they support the *right* of Islamist women to wear the *türban*, but not the actual wearing of it (see Tura 1998; also Öztürk 1988a: 41). Some readers, however, protested the journal's support for Islamist women (*Pazartesi* 18: 10; 25: 6; 36: 11). Feminists responded by arguing that they are critical of both Kemalism and political Islam and it is necessary for them to break with this polarization, which characterizes the Turkish political scene since the 1980s. Thus, they refuse to "give in to the rhetoric of modernity" (Savran and Tura 1996; Tura 1997a). Despite their differences, feminists and Islamist women share common gender subordination as women (Savran and Tura 1996). Although Turkish feminists take issue with the Islamist discourse, they stress the necessity of maintaining a dialogue with Islamist women. For them, fighting political Islam means revealing its sexism, rather than insulting women who cover their heads (Tura 1997a; also see 1997b). Thus, feminists reject getting caught up in the battle fought between Kemalist secularists and Islamists.

Kemalist feminists/women view the rise of Islamist movements as a direct threat to the Kemalist regime and emphasize the need to get women organized against the Islamists.⁴² Kemalist feminists have become more visible and active in the late 1980s and in the 1990s as a result of the polarization between secular Kemalist and Islamist groups in Turkey. They established women's organizations like *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği* (the Association to Support Modern Life) and *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (the Association of Atatürkist Thought) which stand up for the principle of secularism.

⁴² With the rise of the Islamist movement in the mid-1980s Turkish women and feminists were reminded by the secular establishment that they are the guardians of secularism and modernity in Turkey.

Kemalist women continue to express their gratitude to Atatürk for improving the status of women in Turkey. One woman says (translation mine):

The most important issue that faces the women's movement today is Şeriat [the Sharia order]... People do not have choices. Choices are dictated by ideologies... They [radical and socialist feminists] interpret this [wearing headscarves] as a freedom to dress as one chooses. This is not a personal choice. With their attitude [feminists] are playing into the hands of Islamists. They say they don't give into the discourse of modernity. The discourse of modernity is all about the struggle against Şeriat. It is about making women aware of this threat.⁴³

In a recent edited book titled *Aydınlanmanın Kadınları* (Women of the Enlightenment) by a prominent Kemalist feminist and academic Necla Arat, Kemalist women declare that they will always stand up for the Republican principles. As Suna Kili (1998) says, “[w]e will never renounce modernity and the principles of the Revolution. We will never give into fundamentalism. We are Atatürkist”.

Conclusion

Covered Islamist women became visible in the public sphere in the 1980s as active participants in the Islamist movement. Their demands to enter the public sphere while wearing the *türban* have posed a challenge to the Kemalist project of modernity. While Islamist women have become empowered and gained agency through Islamist movements, they have also been seen as “markers of modesty and morality” (Göle 1996a) and Islamic authenticity. Thus, political Islam has placed some restrictions on women's behaviour, bodies and discourses. Some Islamist women have challenged these restrictions. Refusing

⁴³ Interview with Firdevs Gümüšoğlu, July 7, 1999, İstanbul, Turkey.

to submerge their voices in the communitarian project of Islamist movements, these women have (re)negotiated their identities and roles with Islamist men.

Islamist women also criticized secular Kemalist, radical and socialist feminists for collaborating with Western imperialism by disseminating “alien” ideas and practices throughout society. They rejected both Kemalist and feminist claims made on behalf of Turkish women. Yet, by stressing the feminine nature of women, Islamist women have constructed their own essentialized notion of “womanhood”.

This chapter has highlighted the tension within the core values of society (Kemalist secular versus Islamic values). It has argued how women’s bodies have become the battleground for the two competing and conflicting visions of modernity (pro-Western secular Kemalist and Islamist). Women’s covered bodies have differentiated Islamist vision of modernity from the secular Kemalist project of modernity. This section has also exposed the ways in which both Turkish feminist and Islamist women’s discourses and practices are, in fact, informed and shaped by the broader discourses and struggles over modernity, secularism, nationalism and religion. While Turkish feminism has emerged as an internal critique of Kemalism, Islamist women, however, are part of a social and political movement that attempts to shake the pillars of the Kemalist regime and to become hegemonic in society and the state. Yet, while some Islamist women have taken a critical stance against pro-Western Kemalist modernization project, they have also articulated their discourses in dialogue with modernity. Their claims are based on both *equality* and women’s *difference*.

CONCLUSION

Although it has focused on feminist movements in post-1980 Turkey, this dissertation addresses broader questions of the nature of and prospects for transformative social movement politics in late modernity. Contemporary social movements are seen as potential sites of alternative modernities – sites from which Western modernity and the modernizing projects of state elites can be challenged, subverted, transformed and redefined. Contemporary social movements can also be seen as potential agents of democratization, as sites of empowerment/domination and identity formation.

These arguments have been developed through a comparative analysis of feminist movements in Turkey, which have emerged in the 1980s as part of the crisis of Kemalism. Placing women at the center of the study, this dissertation examined the ways in which different groups of women have supported, reproduced, challenged, subverted and transformed the projects and visions of modernity articulated and imposed by both state elites and by male dominated social movements. The discourses and practices of five different groups of women – Kemalist, radical, socialist, Kurdish feminists and Islamist women – have been analyzed, highlighting the multiplicity of perspectives, identities, subaltern public spheres, goals and strategies in relation to feminist and women's activism and discourses in Turkey. This study also provided an occasion to explore the heterogeneity of Turkish society. By presenting a comparative analysis of discourses of different women's groups, it revealed not only the intersections of gender, ethnicity and religion but also the (re)constitution of shifting ethnic, religious and gender identities and relations in Turkey.

Social movements that emerged in post-1980 Turkey have served as sites where marginalized individuals and groups contested, subverted and transformed the Kemalist project of modernity, bringing into public attention long marginalized issues, denied identities and hidden inequalities. Indeed, feminist movements, the Islamist movement and the Kurdish nationalist movement challenged the Turkish state as the sole actor in shaping society. They have challenged the deeply entrenched certainties of the Kemalist state project of modernity: *state feminism*, *secularism* and *nationalism*. They have sought to displace the dominant Kemalist national narrative by articulating competing and subversive counter-narratives and forming new identities.

As the analysis of the Turkish feminist movement revealed contemporary social movements are not inherently democratic or inclusive. Social movements in Turkey, including the feminist movement(s), have critiqued the Kemalist articulation of the nation as an organic community for its disciplining and exclusionary tendencies. Yet, they have also invoked the discourse of community to mobilize activism and engage the broader public in their alternative discourses. In their efforts to produce unity and to generate activism, these movements have themselves ended up universalizing a particular identity or prioritizing one identity over the rest.

Indeed, Islamist and Kurdish nationalist movements have challenged the homogenizing and universalizing discourse of Kemalism on the basis of equally homogeneous and essentialist constructions/representations of national and religious communities. Positing these ideal communities as the “other” of the existing society foreclosed the possibility of breaking out of the oppositional categories of “them” and “us”. In Turkey, especially the identities and the political projects that the Islamist

movement produced have the potential to become hegemonic in the institutions of the state and society, that is to become a new legitimizing identity.

Furthermore, as the analysis in this dissertation revealed, Turkish and Kurdish feminists and a group of Islamist women have exposed the *gendered* nature of competing visions, projects, and practices of modernity and identity formation in Turkey. As we have seen, gender issues have continually shaped (and have been shaped by) the terms of the debates on modernity, secularism, nationalism and democracy in Turkey. Within the discourses and projects articulated by Kemalist secularists, Islamists and Kurdish nationalists, women are ascribed different identities, roles and missions: they are portrayed either as symbols of modernity or backwardness or as embodiments of morality and cultural authenticity.

Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have criticized not only the hegemonic Kemalist discourse but also Islamist movements and Kurdish nationalism for their totalizing and universalizing collectivist discourses, which, like Kemalism, reinforce a particular identity or a mission for women. This dissertation has thus highlighted the significance of feminist social movements since they have undermined the identity politics of the collectivist discourses of Kemalism, political Islam and Kurdish nationalism, which tend to homogenize communities by denying internal differences. By emphasizing women's difference, feminists and women's groups have made visible the internal heterogeneity of these communities and have challenged the boundaries of the communities as defined by men. Feminist interventions contribute to enhance democracy in Turkey by helping to reconstruct a more inclusive and democratic political community.

This thesis has thus highlighted the importance of feminist politics and women's activism for the process of democratization in Turkey. The feminist movement(s) have contributed to the democratization process by exposing to public debate gendered authoritarianisms and inclusions/exclusions embedded in everyday life and in the current democratic framework. In other words, they have been involved in the process of "double democratization" – i.e. the simultaneous democratization of the state and civil society. Feminisms in Turkey have publicized new issues and demands, claimed new citizenship rights, monitored the state, pressured the state to comply with its commitments to women, and thus contributed to the democratization process. Through autonomous collective action and organizing, the feminist movements have transformed the politics of gender in Turkey.

Yet, the invocation of an exclusionary discourse of community, which have especially marginalized women of different ethnic groups and religious convictions, has also been evident in the Turkish feminist movement. Turkish feminist groups have problematized the organicist, collectivist and gendered aspects of the Kemalist national identity by bringing women's difference into the male-dominated public sphere. Yet, they have failed to question the secular and ethnic dimensions of the Kemalist project of modernity. While they have recognized differences among women and put emphasis on the multiple sources of oppression, they have projected a homogeneous, essentialized identity to make public women's oppression based on gender.

Turkish feminism, then, defined feminist politics in terms of the "politics of difference" by appealing to women's difference to justify their demands. Yet, by projecting an essentialized identity of "women" to challenge the dominant Kemalist

gender discourse, they marginalized other women. This dissertation showed the ways in which Islamist women and Kurdish feminists exposed the homogenizing and universalizing aspects not only of the Kemalist project of modernity but also of Turkish feminism. Yet, both Islamist women and Kurdish feminists have also constructed an essentialized notion of “womanhood”, which in turn may serve to justify collective and political control of women’s bodies and sexualities in communitarian discourses. There are women in each group, however, who raise questions about their roles others have attributed to them and which they attribute to themselves. With their struggles for recognition and participation in public life and with their discourses, some Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women undermined the totalizing and collectivist political and social projects of Kemalism, Islamism and Kurdish nationalism.

Despite their differences, Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have engaged in debates over issues concerning women. There has been ongoing negotiation among these women’s groups as each (re)constructed its identity with reference to “other” groups. These debates reveal that women’s groups recognize the existence of multiple feminine identities competing in the public sphere. Turkish and Kurdish feminists and Islamist women have challenged the Kemalist representations of women (albeit in different ways), while at the same time using the channels opened by Kemalism, which introduced women to the public sphere as citizens. Emphasizing women’s differences, they have demanded the recognition of women as *different* and yet *equal* participants in the public sphere. While feminists and Islamist women disagree on the issues of secularism and Islam, Turkish and Kurdish feminists could not resolve the issue of the relation between ethnicity and patriarchy. While Turkish feminists view the

family as a major site for women's oppression and exploitation, Kurdish feminists view the Kurdish family as a site of resistance to assimilation.

The challenges posed by both Islamist women and Kurdish feminists to Turkish feminism in the 1990s have led to continuous negotiations of, and often contentious debates over the meaning and significance of feminism and the appropriate sites, targets and goals of feminist politics. As Nancy Fraser argued "subaltern counterpublics stand in a contestatory relationship to dominant publics". Indeed, Islamist women's and Kurdish feminist counterpublics contested the boundaries and the scope of the Turkish feminist public sphere. Both Islamist and Kurdish women exposed the exclusionary discourses and practices of Turkish feminists: while Islamist women pointed to the *secularist* bias of the feminist movement, Kurdish women problematize its *ethnic* dimension.

The dissertation pointed to the lack of strong and long-lasting alliances among different groups of women. If feminists seek to continue contributing to the process of democratization in Turkey, their starting point should be to address the issue of differences among women. The Turkish feminist movement needs to develop strategies to reconcile women's diversity. Turkish feminists must problematize not only the *gendered* aspect of Kemalism, but also its *ethnic* and *secular* dimensions in order to build solidarities and challenge not only the existing gender hierarchy but also ethnic, class and religious hierarchies in Turkish polity. As Mohanty (1991: 58) argues, "[s]isterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in concrete historical and political practice and analysis".

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