
By

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To my family
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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy


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Applying at-home-ethnography and semi-structured interviews, this dissertation aims at finding answers to the following questions: who or what is/are the Other(s) for ordinary Turks? Do Turks view themselves as part of the West, set against the East, or the other way around? What kind of ideas and images do Turks associate with their Self? Their Other(s)? And what are the cultural sources and/or social institutions that shape these images?

This dissertation is built upon the interpretive approach to social sciences. Relying on the information gathered during two fieldworks in Turkey and the autobiographical mystery of the author, this study discusses five general themes of representation that form a composite picture of ambiguous system of Othering among the ordinary Turks. The dissertation first deals with the problematic notion of ‘paranoid Turk.’ It is followed by the relationship between colonial discourse and representation of the Other. Next, the notion of nostalgia is discussed as a form representation of the Other. Finally, women’s perception of the Other is discussed.
This study maintains that representation of the Other in Turkey is a reflection of a Self that is Western in public and Eastern in private. As a result of this dual-self-perception, there is not a single obvious Other among the ordinary Turks that can be defined according to the common binary of the East and the West. This also explains how Othering is mostly partial and lacking rigid boundaries.

Through different stories and theoretical discussions, this dissertation shows that the impact of the official state discourse on the perceptions of the individuals is significant. However, it is emphasized that state-ideology, which people usually oppose in various cases, is not the sole source of people’s perceptions of their Self and the Other. There are numerous other sources of the images of the Self and the Other such as tales, rumor, family histories, and personal experiences.

This dissertation also points out the trend that representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks is full ambiguities. These ambiguities mostly stem from the identity crises Turks find themselves due their position in-between the West and the East.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Nail, the Naeel, Living in International Relations

International Relations (IR) scholars do not only study international relations, they study in international relations. After reading Geertz’s (1973, 23) observation that “anthropologists do not study villages (...) they study in villages,” I started to conceive international relations as a village which we, the researchers, and ‘objects/subjects’ of our studies—if we can separate them at all—co-populate. Geertz’s reflection was not the first time I read about the constitutive relationship between the researchers and their ‘objects’ of study. Yet, it was a concisely salient statement that helped me explain the ‘available’ scope and methodologies of ‘doing IR.’ It guided me in encapsulating my living/studying international relations in the US as a Turkish citizen. It briefly summarized my situation that I frequently found myself living in the village that I once ‘thought’ I was only studying. It eased how I explain my approach: I do not only investigate representation of the Other, but I also represent and am represented.

Compared to the members of a majority, I suppose that an international student/scholar, in different spheres of her professional and daily life, is likely to experience majority’s systems of representation more obviously. Studying representation of the Other as ‘overseas’ students in the US, we might not be able take off our jackets of “strangerness” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012); even if we often desire to do so. Inescapably, we, as ‘strangers,’ conduct research on the representation of the Other. We do not only study the practice of othering, which might be a “sine qua non circumstance in international relations” (Reinke de Buitrago 2012, xv), but we study in it.
Geertz’s remark summarizes the crux of my dissertation. Internalizing the foundational premises of the interpretive approach, my dissertation is partly the product of my modest and rather timid intention of authoring an “autobiographical IR” (Inayatullah 2011b). It is a script that “chorography” and “mystory” (Pearson 2006) could elucidate the essence of. It is an account of representation of the Other among ordinary Turks that those who enjoy reading the (sterile) language of ‘scientific IR’ might not find pleasant or scientific enough.

My dissertation is autobiographical. Throughout the dissertation, my ‘self’ is present. Therefore, before dwelling on my account of representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks, let me first introduce my self or relational situation with respect to my larger, encompassing, and constitutive social domains.

My name is Nail—pronounced as Na-EEL. Once, a pizza delivery person asked, “Dude! Is this your real name?” I answered, “Yes. It is on my credit card! They don’t give credit cards to fake names, right?” “My father chose a name that is originally Arabic. He never thought that I might move to the States and keep being asked the same question over and over!” I replied so many times. I was born in Kayseri—located in central Turkey—to a middle class, Turkish Muslim family. I can hear some saying: “What else could it be? It is Kayseri and your name is obviously not a minority name. Of course, a Muslim family.” Hometowns! Do they always have to be a part of us?

It was a cold winter day in 2008. After so many years, I still remember it very well because it was one of those few times I was unusually embarrassed of being myself. A classroom, full of graduate students in Istanbul, Turkey. One of our friends was presenting the topic of the week: ‘Secularism, Democracy and Political Islam.’ During
the presentation, I was taking notes, going through the readings and constantly taking notes about my research on ‘public approval of Islamist terror in Muslim societies.’ The presentation went on. A new slide in almost every other minute. It was long and monotonous.

At some point, I was lost. I was thinking about something off campus. Dinner by the Bosporus. But my distraction did not last long. Suddenly, I was under the flashlight. I did not know what preceded me being pointed out but it all started with “… radical Islamists. They are against secularism. We have an expert here. Maybe we should ask him.” She was looking at me. Expert? She must have meant my ongoing research, I thought. I was not an expert. I was simply running regressions to see the correlation between some variables and approval of Islamist terror. I sure was far from being an expert. Anyhow! After a brief confusion, I straightened up and nervously got ready to relate the presentation to my research topic. I was about to comment. Yet, it turned out that I did not need to.

She continued repulsively, “He is from Kayseri. I am sure he knows about radical Muslims better than we do. Don’t you?” I thought it was insulting. Being shown as someone coming from a city full of so-called ‘radical Muslims’ or ‘extremists’ was not nice. No, it was not pleasant at all. Yet, she was smiling. And the rest of the class was quiet.

Laughter somewhere broke the ice-cold silence. It was the laughter of “someone has just made faux pas.” I was embarrassed. My ears were burning. I just wanted to stand up and say, “Get the hell out my face. Fuck off.” I did not want to use any
academic terms. Nor did I want to be formal or kind. I just wanted to shout, “Enough! Tired of this bullshit.”

Was it her illiteracy or stereotypes? Is a stereotype also ignorance? I do not know. She was ‘well-educated’ and had a couple of degrees from prestigious schools. She also told me that she had visited my hometown and liked it so much. What made her assume that I would have known the ‘radical Islamists’ better than anybody else? Just because I was born and raised in Kayseri?

Our professor stood up muttering. Whispered superseded the silence. Others might not have sensed the intensity of each and every single move. Things, for me, were quite dramatic. Luckily, I thought, we had an authority in the class to call off the ‘awkward’ moments. The professor ordered, “Let’s skip consulting the class for a moment. The Q&A is at the end. What is the next slide?” And he turned to me and said, apologetically, “Sorry. Your friend is not at her best politically correct moment.” What is politically correct? What makes a statement politically correct or wrong? Is politically correct different from ‘simply correct?’ Did she really have to hide her ‘perception’ of me? I wanted to talk. I wanted to say, “Yes, people are mostly conservative in my hometown. But I don’t know any radicals.” I did not say a word.

I was glad that the topic was changed because I did not know how to channel my anger politely. The presentation went on and finally ended. After the class, everybody commented how funny the moment was. For me, it was more than that. I was about to hate my hometown. But obviously, there was no escape from it. Some belongings, I thought, were inescapable, which I am glad for now. Identities can be deadly as Maalouf wrote in In the Name of Identity, or they can be our little day-time nightmares. They
might be our burdens that we have to accommodate our lives accordingly or burdens that we want to forget in accordance with the life we choose.

Long story in short, I am from Kayseri. I was brought up as a Sunni Muslim. I am a secular person who still finds himself using religious phrases such as ‘God forbids’ or ‘Inshallah’ with no deep attachments. I was brought up in a ‘decent’ neighborhood as the youngest and only son of my family. I had the advantages of being a male that my two sisters probably could not enjoy in a city where women were women since the early years of their lives. I enjoyed the free space a male could get within the limits of the regulating morals of my hometown that I occasionally wanted to leave ‘as a past.’

My father’s principles indoctrinated my world-view in a way that, for me, education was the only game in town. For instance, a college degree was not an option but the prerequisite for PhD. That is why unlike the other kids of our neighborhood, I spent most of my time at home reading or running after extra-curricular activities. I never played soccer on the street after a certain age like the other children of our neighborhood did—I wish I could call them friends. As once someone said, “I was more mature than my age!” I had to grow up faster for some reasons that I cannot comfortably share here. Perhaps, this dissertation, at the end, gives me the strength and courage to share my stories further. Yet, all I can tell, for now, is that I always felt ‘older’ than my own generation. That out-of-season maturity did have a positive consequence that I never had any difficulty in the education system of Turkey.

I received my bachelor and master degrees in IR—Bilkent and Koc Universities, respectively—in Turkey. I lived in so many cities including ‘not so radical Muslim’ ones. I started learning IR in English. Hence, my curriculum or academic socialization had
been in the trajectory of a “Not so International” but “American” discipline (Wæver 1998). If there is anything called Turkish-IR, I am mostly alien(ated) to it. In 2009, I moved to the US in pursuit of a doctorate. I was lucky to have been accepted by the Political Science department in University of Florida because I am aware that the programs we are enrolled in, our colleagues and our mentors could open up new spaces for ‘new kinds’ of IR. It is mostly this new space that initially encouraged me to go after ‘alternative’ research papers, research designs and eventually these pages.

In this dissertation, I am interested in the representation of the Other among ordinary Turks in their daily lives. For this study, I employed interpretive methods. To assert, “I employ,” indicates my active role in choosing certain methods among others. However, as Hurd once stated during a workshop, “we sometimes do not intentionally choose methods but they find us” (2013). I must admit that my choice of methods was partially a passive struggle during which they found me.

When I started working on this project, I was quite confident that I needed an approach that emphasized at least two aspects of my research. Firstly, my approach needed to embrace the ‘self’ of the researcher embedded in the act of representation of the Other. Secondly, it should have allowed some space for emphasizing the ‘self’ as rooted within the professional endeavor of comprehending, converting, and reporting the process of othering as an element of social sciences. I was sure that an approach including these two main assumptions pertained to my study. And I noticed that interpretive methods I chose for this study would have enabled me better to author the following pages of my IR.
Research within the Self

There is no inception of this study. At least, I can truly admit that how this study was initiated was not as systematic as how I conducted it. I did not read an entire literature and formulize at least a couple of hypotheses to work on. Nor did I figure out a feasible research that is remarkably ‘interesting.’ I, somehow, was dragged into this topic.

The following pages are not sterilized from I, which so many social scientists persistently find troubling. Besides the unconventional tone of my writing, the following pages are personal that it sheds lights on the abandoned ‘backstage’ or ‘behind the scene’ of a PhD student’s research. It reflects on the human aspect or the sociology of the discipline. We study human aspects of researchers as a separate topic or completely deny its existence. I, instead, enjoyed the liberty of writing the professional and personal together. The research and its sociology are fused.

Being a Turkish citizen, I involuntarily became a ‘minority’ when I moved to the United States to study politics. In Turkey, I applied the methods of objective science to the study of Islamist terrorism. But, once I became a foreign student, from a Muslim country, in a non-Muslim environment, I came to see the limits of these methods. Both my professional and daily life in the US sensitized me to the fact that I was part and parcel of the social world that I was studying. I realized that I would need new tools to analyze social issues in ways that did not require me to separate myself from the object of my study.

While my methodological confusion continued, I became interested in the following questions: who or what is/are the Other(s) for ordinary Turks, myself included? For example, do Turks view themselves as part of the West, set against the East, or the
other way around? What kind of ideas and images do Turks, myself included, associate with their Self? Their Other(s)? And what are the cultural sources and/or social institutions that shape these images?

To tackle these questions, I began to explore interpretive approaches to social science more ‘professionally’ because these approaches tend to emphasize the reflexive nature of social inquiry. I came to recognize that each visit to my home country was an opportunity for research. In fact, my everyday life in Gainesville, too, was a ‘field.’ However, I needed to go beyond anecdotal evidence and study the matter more systematically.

In summer 2012, I conducted a pilot study in Turkey. My purpose was to find out whether the ethnographic research methods I had in mind would be useful for gathering the information I needed. I steadily recorded my everyday observations and interactions concerning the representation of the Other. I wrote the images of the other societies/identities the ordinary Turks hold. I invited people that I knew to conversations that would resemble unstructured interviews. I informed them that I was interested in the images of Other societies on people’s mind and planning to conduct research in Turkey on representation of the Other. As a result of my trial of “hanging-out with people” (Pachirat 2006) and recording my daily observations for almost four months, I concluded that ethnographic methods were appropriate for my research purposes.

I subsequently made two extended research trips to Turkey, one during spring-summer 2013, the other during winter-spring 2014. I spent time in multiple cities. I used methods of “at-home-ethnography” (Alvesson 2009, Leap 1996) or “native-ethnography” (Narayan 1993) in order to observe and be a part of the daily practices of representation.
of the Other. Building upon my experiences in my pilot study, I conducted “semi-structured ordinary language interviews” (Schaffer 2006) in Turkish during which I used the method of “free-association” (Isaacs 1958). Unstructured interviews formed an essential component of my research because at-home-ethnography or spending time with people in their daily routines did not always adequately reveal people's images. During the two trips, I conducted and recorded (or transcribed) a total of 163 interviews in several parts of the country, including the 'modern Western region' (including Istanbul) and ‘the traditional Anatolian heartland’ (including Ankara, where I went to College, and the city of Kayseri, where I grew up).

I conducted my 163 interviews in venues such as traditional and male-dominated cafes, modern coffee shops (e.g., Starbucks), bus stations, and social clubs. I typically started each interview with certain pre-selected questions. For instance, I asked my interlocutors whether they had traveled abroad or what they thought about the 'West-East' division. My interviews were “ordinary language interview” which “is a tool for uncovering the everyday meanings of words” (Schaffer 2006, 15). Therefore, when my interlocutors used an idiom or a phrase I always asked them to clarify what it means for them. My interviews thus allowed me to decipher the meanings of specific statements, words, or images and allowed me to relate my interviewees' views to the broader narrative the society maintains (Soss 2006, 128). This in turn helped me identify general trends of representation of the Other that form the central themes of my dissertation.

As part of my interviews I also used the technique of “free association” (Isaacs 1958). For instance, I asked, “What first comes to your mind when I say the West?” and upon their responses I asked them to elaborate. Additionally, I used prompts such as
the infamous “Burn a Quran Day” in Gainesville or the “Cartoon Crisis” in Denmark in 2006, and asked my interviewees whether they were familiar with them. These prompts proved highly effective in channeling the conversation toward the issue of the representation of the Other.

My ethnographic research in Turkey was not restricted to interviews. On a nearly daily basis, I took detailed notes of observations such as chats with taxi drivers, chance encounters with ordinary Turks at bus stops or other public places, social events in which I participated, and more. Thus, in addition to 163 interview transcripts, I returned from my research trips with detailed field notes of more than 100 ethnographic observations.

In seeking information or experiences for making sense of representation of the Other and the scratches on people’s mind, I relied on my planned research trips to Turkey. However, both during my research and my making sense, I could not help going back and forth between my present and past, and images that belonged to different time and space. Therefore, I must admit that the question that I have been directed various times: “So, how do you define time and location of your research?” is difficult to answer. I could have simply described the time frame as my planned trips to Turkey. However, it would not describe the true nature of my study. That “my fieldwork and I form the time and space of my research” would be a better description of the scope of my study.

As an outcome of this obscurity between my past and present, and the co-generated information during my fieldwork, I identified general themes or trends of representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks. These themes combine into a complex and composite picture of Othering that can be briefly described as a bundle of
contradictory portrayals/signifiers. What we sometimes dismiss as simple or irrational images, I happen to understand, are in fact multifaceted and ‘knowledge-based’ sentiments. I understood—not necessarily agreed with—some images that were beyond my ‘imagination.’ Occasionally, I wanted to ignore some of them, which I found sickeningly disturbing.

One of the general traits of representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks is that individuals I had a chance to meet were persons of ambiguous identities. Almost everyone had a desire to be a member of the ‘West’ while they detach from it when for reasons such as supposed lack of moral in the Western societies. They seemed to have undertaken a mission to ‘portray’ the Turkish society as a Western community or to work hard to purify the image of Turkish society from the Eastern ‘labels’ while they were left ‘free’ to be as Eastern as they could in their private lives. Apparent especially among my women interlocutors, ordinary Turks had stories of being westerner on the street and easterner at home. Their crafted public image generally diverged from their private images.

The other component of the bigger picture I believe the stories in the following pages draw is that, contrary to my expectation, there was no clear single Other. I presumed that my interlocutors or their images would gather on two separate categories of identities: The West and the East. As I discuss later, I left the West and the East to be defined by my interlocutors. Yet, I never gave even the slightest chance to the possibility of different degrees of being easterner or westerner. In other words, I was expecting them to identify a precise Other for a fixed self and center our conversations on this particular Other. Yet, almost ubiquitously their othering was partial. One entity
was both an inferior Other, for instance in terms of morality, and part of the Self, for instance due to the similar consumptions patterns, during a conversation as short as ten minutes.

Another general trend of othering is the impact of the official state discourse on individuals’ perceptions. I, personally, found this trend as troubling because I considered myself as ‘free from the state control’ in my approach to the outer world. Yet, I discovered that so many ‘normal’ attitudes of mine were in fact under the influence of the ontological security concerns of the broader society/country. During my fieldwork, I occasionally found myself looking at a mirror. I questioned my daily discourse. For instance, I decided to give up using some idioms or analogies as they incorporated lack of trust towards the minorities of Turkey, whom the ideology of the Republic designated as threats. Similarly, the distinction between the ‘modern’ and ‘traditional,’ or ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ as forms of othering in daily life were partial reflections of the ideology of the founding figures of Turkey. This, in fact, I later agreed, was significantly related to the formation of a society that is Western in public, Eastern in private. However, this does not mean that the official state discourse is the sole source of people’s perceptions. The stories of my interlocutors clearly indicate that there are various sources of knowledge such as tales, rumor, family histories, personal experiences or TV shows.

The stories of representation of the Other are full ambiguities. These ambiguities first and foremost stems from the identity crises Turks find themselves due their position of being in a limbo between the West and the East. Their comparison of a history of a powerful community with today’s ‘lacking’ Self certainly adds to this vagueness. Most of
the individuals do not know ‘what to do with history.’ Their selective collective memories and their indefinite denial of certain historical episodes influence their perceptions of the Other. In short, most of my interlocutors were in fact in search of an Other that is an outcome of their ongoing search for a Self or for a home.

**Writing about My Self and the Other**

Since Fall 2014, I have processed my fieldwork experiences and authored the following pages in the order you will read. Overall, my dissertation is an example of “autobiographical IR” (Inayatullah 2011b). It is a form of scholarship that permits the presence of the author in the text, involving the “reengagement of the “I” while sustaining theoretical precision and historical awareness” (Inayatullah 2011a). The ultimate product of my research is *mystory* through *chorography*.

The following chapters transcend the time and space dimension of my fieldwork as a result of my re-discovery of my own *self*. It is an outcome of a journey during which I had the opportunity to re-organize my own memories, heal some of my own wounds (and sometimes twist the knife), and tried to get rid of my own prejudices. It is a ‘research story’ that I authored in accordance with the five general themes of representation of the Other that forms the composite picture I summarized.

Before the themes of representation of the Other, in my second chapter, I explain my research puzzle and how I formulated my research questions. Then, I explain my writing style in detail for those who would be interested in pursuing similar projects or authoring a similar study. After that, I summarize the founding premises of my research, or of interpretive approaches to social sciences, which is followed by the literature that had guided my prior understanding of representation of the Other. After the literature
review, I provide a detailed account of the early stages and the conduct of my research that includes a general framework of analysis I formulated before my field trips.

My chapter three centers on the first theme of representation of Other: Political Paranoia. It is a critique of extant approaches to the subject such as Hofstadter’s famous essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.” Adopting a different analytical framework on subjectivity of knowledge, I discuss images as instances of representation of the Other, not as examples of paranoid thinking. In understanding people’s knowledge or identity formation, I show how considering people’s perceptions as representation of the Other is more accurate than applying a “paranoia framework.” It is more accurate because instead of dealing with merely people’s opinions as anomalies, regarding them as representation of the Other allows researchers to comprehend the roots of these views. It shifts our attention from the images themselves as the ultimate outcome to the processes through which these images are constructed. It shows how “normal” each and every image harbored by a society can be.

Chapter four focuses on the relationship between colonial discourse and Turkish representations of the Other. Drawing on the literature on discourse of colonialism and post-colonialism, for example, Fanon and Nandy, I show how Turkish representation of the Other resembles colonial discourse. I present evidence from my interviews and field observations documenting the ambiguity and complexity of the minds of ordinary Turks: how their minds combine feelings of being superior—as a colonizer—and inferiority—as a colonized. I portray Turkish society as “Orientalist within the Orient.” And I advance discussions on hybrid identities by showing the fluidity and obscurity of individuals’
interpretations of the Self and the Other. I also show how admiration and hatred towards the Other can co-exist at one single given time and space.

In the fifth chapter, I draw on the literature on “Nostalgia,” particularly “Societal Nostalgia.” I first discuss how nostalgia is not primarily a longing for the past but how it is related to the present and the future. I demonstrate how nostalgia is in fact a form of othering—other societies, alternative futures, alternative pasts, and present contradiction within a society. Contributing to the previous explanations of Nostalgia, I describe how the nostalgia in Turkish society is related to yearning for a center in world politics: a yearning for a center that is representative of the Muslim world. It shows how dominant understanding of nostalgia as yearning for a certain space and/or time can be limited in the sense that nostalgia—as a form Othering—can include “ideational factors” such as an alternative international system.

Chapter six discusses representation of the Other across genders. I particularly focus on Turkish Women’s perception of the Other (Women) and their images of other societies concerning gender equality, women rights, family structures, and norms. I discuss how the ontological security of the Turkish women is constructed via normative threats external to Turkish society. I show how a self builds its own glory and honor through an Other’s indecency or immorality. I demonstrate the lack of gender-solidarity between Turkish women and the Other over certain issues.

Finally, in chapter seven, I summarize the general trends of representation of the Other and how they are related to the previous studies. My study would contribute to the literature of Orientalism, Occidentalism, theorization of representation of the Other, and international relations. For instance, I provide support for the idea that Othering is
always partial and it is a juxtaposition of ambiguous identities within a single self, which has been under-theorized. In this chapter, I also discuss the contributions of my autobiographical or interpretive research to the discipline of IR. I show the merits of my methods and examine the weaknesses with further research questions.
CHAPTER 2
AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF REPRESENTATION OF THE OTHER

From a Conference to a Barbershop: Puzzles and Questions of the Daily Life

It was my first year in the USA. Struggling to settle down in a rather small college town and ambitiously searching for a new, catchy and feasible research question, I was exposed to the alternative ways of conducting research in Political Science. It was a major change for me. Until then I was interested in mainly inter-state relations, game theory, statistical analysis, collecting data at the macro-level, and writing research papers that excluded the I. I was taught to do so. It was the legitimate way of conducting research and writing.

At the beginning of this project, I remembered so many of my English instructors. I am sincerely grateful for them for teaching me a second language back in Turkey. Yet, I recall, particularly, one of them. It was 2007 and I had to take an Academic Writing class as a requirement for my program. The instructor was from California. During one of the classes, she drew two figures on the blackboard for comparing academic and daily languages. She also used those figures to compare the Turkish reasoning to the Western thinking.

One of the figures was mainly formed by straight arrows similar to the ones we use to explain decision-making processes, like a decision making tree. It was plain. You start with a point. Move to the next one by choosing in between your alternatives and each step of writing or thinking follows the previous lines consistently. The second figure was a cluttered doodle. She put the chalk on the blackboard. Never lifted it. In anarchy, she drew a cloud of lines. From where I sit, the drawing looked like a spiral of irregular lines. It was the daily, not the academic, language, she argued. It was not the language
of science. She emphasized that regular, step-by-step or ordered nature of science required a sterile style, an elegant style ‘disinfected’ from the first person pronoun. For her, we, Turks, thought or reasoned similar to the chaotic figure on the blackboard. We were not trained to think and write in a systematic way. Furthermore, she did not hesitate to tell that our “disorganized reasoning” was one of the characteristics of the Eastern cultures.

I was not offended. I was trying to become a part of the scientific IR community. I needed to write step-by-step and clean. I had to exclude the researcher. I should not have mentioned the personal or the emotional, unless I, the excluded, defined them as variables. As she suggested, we all had to give up thinking like a Turk but get used to the straightforward reasoning and writing. And we all did. At least, we tried.

It was one of the ‘products’ of such an academic writing that I submitted to a conference in the USA in 2009. I got accepted and presented my paper in front of an audience of other fellow graduate students, professors, and editors. The paper was objective. So was my presentation. I never used the I. I introduced myself as a graduate student at University of Florida. That was all. After the panel, I had no idea what was next. I was quite nervous and shy. I hastily packed my bag to leave the conference room.

Outside the panel room, a professor and her co-author greeted me. After re-reading each other’s name from our conference badges and briefly chatting about our conference papers, she asked, “Where are you originally from?” I replied, “Turkey.” I, being Turkish, was more interesting than my paper with which our conversation started. This must have been the reason. I still do not see any other reasons our topic changed
from “Your measurement of religiosity is very operational” to “Turks have always impressed me with their English skills.”

The conversation became tedious. I had no idea why I was talking about the Turkish education system. How about we talked about improving my dataset. No! I was reluctantly explaining the education system in Turkey. “No. English is not our second official language,” I told her. It was March 2009 but I was transported back to 1997, to the day I talked to a couple of Australian tourists in my hometown. Their visualization of me was no different than the professor. My Turkishness and talking in a second, foreign, language was again the topic of our conversation. Unintentionally, or not, she made me feel different. I thought, my paper sounded as ‘Western’ as possible. Besides, I was there as a student of IR, not a Turk. Yet, this and numerous other encounters kept slapping me on the face: “You are different,” “Your accent is funny. Oh! Don’t worry, not in a bad way,” “Where are you from? Your English is good. And believe me, when we say your English is good, it’s a compliment”—Thank you!

Reading In the Name of Identity by Maalouf (2000)—a Lebanese who lives in France, knows Arabic but writes in French and defines himself with multiple identities—I was first exposed to the matters of identity. I was a freshman at Bilkent University and the book was my first step into the world of identity issues. However, by then, it did not attract my attention as a research topic. I thought about people with multiple identities. I imagined how difficult life was for the minority. I did not personalize the teachings of the book. I read it as a ‘normal’ person that showed some empathy for the ‘minority,’ for the different, or for those who had rather difficult lives for being who they were. Until moving to the United States, I had always been within my own self, a member of the majority—
except temporary ‘alien’ statuses in Europe. I felt like a ‘real minority’ only when I started my graduate program in the US, or having have to fill in my residential status as a “non-resident alien” in many documents. These changed my conscious thinking or research on identity as a personal topic.

I do not use ‘minority’ in the conventional meaning of relative numbers. Instead, being a minority can stem from other structural settings of a county, society, or basically a majority. Institutionalized knowledge or systems of representation can turn individuals or groups into a ‘minority.’ I have never been ‘more Turkish’ than I have been in the US. The social institutions of the society—be it knowledge, language, economy, and et cetera—have kept enforcing the differences, constituted them, generated prejudices and stereotypes, and perpetuated those at different spheres. It was not me who identified myself, but “the scratches on people’s mind” (Isaacs 1958) defined me. No matter how hard I tried not to be pre-defined, I definitely became a Turk—or more Turk. In various occasions, I was already a someone, an Other.

I sometimes became less ‘minor’ when other ‘more different minorities’ and I shared the same spatial setting. Occasionally, I found myself in solidarity with the majority in Othering ‘more different’ minorities. These made me realize that being interested in international relations and specifically how different societies perceive the Other, I do not only study international relations but live it as well. I live the representation of the Other. That is, I was both the signifier and the signified.

During one of my trips-back-home for a summer break, I realized that contrary to my expectations, which had been mostly shaped by the literature on Islamist terror (See i.e. Mousseau 2011), individuals sharing similar socio-economic and cultural
backgrounds do not necessarily share or hold the similar images of the Other. Comparably, people of diverging life-styles can have common images or similar traits of othering.

“They have certainly not changed since they first confronted Islam,” the passenger seated next to me commented during our flight to Turkey. Taking another sip from his wine, he continued, “The Crusaders. Today’s rage is the metamorphoses of the Crusades. They burned our books, cities, and mosques in the past and they still strive.” A Turkish man, probably in his late fifties, expressed his concern about a denominational church’s plan to host an international “Burn a Quran Day” in Gainesville, a small college town in Florida. He did not articulate whom “they” referred to. I did not ask him to do so, either. A random talk between two strangers sitting next to each other was more revealing than an interview conducted by a graduate student interested in people’s perception of the proposed “Burn a Quran Day” on the tenth anniversary of the September 11 attacks. It was quite obvious that his understanding of “they” was beyond the American society. He referred to a larger community to whom he had no hesitation in relating the Crusades.

During the same summer break, a barber who re-opened his shop after a Friday prayer—in my hometown most of the local shops are closed during the Friday prayer since conducting trade during the weekly prayer is considered a sin—recalled the “Burn a Quran Day.” He told me that he and his customers had discussed it after seeing it on a newspaper. The barber started the conversation when he heard that I was a student in the US. I had no clue about his private life where he might privately disregard the religious principles. However, publicly, he was a devout Muslim who chose to close his
shop for the Friday prayer. His approach to the proposed Burn a Quran day was more heated and suspicious than the passenger. Yet, both of them referred to similar archetypical images in giving meaning to the issue.

A few customers agreed with the barber who started with “You know better than I do,” referring to my education in Political Science. “But,” he maintained, “You guys,” referring to the students receiving education in the United States “are blindfolded.” He tried to be very respectful. Still, he thought he had the advantage of his older age and of ‘not’ receiving any American education. His ideas, he believed, were more ‘objective’ than mine. With this pride, he indicated that those who wanted to burn the Quran were ignorant of the superiority of Islam. For him they were as ignorant as their ancestors had been. They were the ones that have been celebrating, for centuries, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in Vienna, he summed up while he was washing my hair.

These individual views I came across momentarily and rather randomly were iterated several times. On occasion, people exhibited almost the same generalization in locating the US society within a generic Other. They were daily encounters and my interactions were not more than an unplanned conversation with individuals. They were people living in a small Anatolian town and were seemingly different from the passenger drinking his wine. On the other hand, some individuals strongly affiliated with an Islamic identity were critical and sensitive that they did not over-generalize the Burn a Quran Day to a broader community or an Other. Similar to several Muslims living in Gainesville, their temper was more controlled. Their focus was more on the particular church rather than a broader entity that have been supposedly striving for their own interests at the expense of the well being of the Muslim world. The Other for them was
not the one having survived since ancient times but it was the current and specific congregation trying to spread hatred between communities.

I found it noteworthy that different individuals having dissimilar daily practices—one complying with the principles of Islam and one flouting the basics such as the ban of alcohol—had converging practices of portraying the Other. The picture of representation of the Other I redrew turn out to be an interesting puzzle that benevolent archetypical images of the Other or higher level of antagonism can stem from different individualities. I was expecting a correlation between religiosity—or socio-economic backgrounds—and hostility towards the West as the literature I was familiar with emphasized. Yet, apparently, the case was not so, especially, at the micro level. The practices of othering among the ordinary people were beyond my comprehension with the help of the macro-level explanations. The puzzle, I thought, was clear that there was no strong support for any correlation in daily life.

Being interested in the confusing practices of representation of the Other I came across, I decided to focus on the images ordinary individuals—not key foreign policy decision makers, state leaders or politicians—harbor in assigning meaning to the Other. For this, I formulated my research questions. In fact, I would like to call my research questions as ‘guiding-questions’ or ‘directing-questions’ since we never know what difficulties would arise during our research process.

My questions that has directed this dissertation are: Who or what is/are the Other(s) for ordinary Turks, myself included? For example, do Turks view themselves as part of the West, set against the East, or the other way around? What kind of ideas
and images do Turks, myself included, associate with their Self? Their Other(s)? And
what are the cultural sources and/or social institutions that shape these images?

Mystery of the Autobiographical and the Ethnographic

Living the daily representation more obviously and building a conscious thinking
of representation of the Other, I have noticed one more thing: While I am with my self, my language, thinking and stereotypes included various forms of Othering—mostly innocent (!) For instance, a proverb that I have used since my childhood has an innocent figurative meaning. However, it could be extremely insulting for a minority living in Turkey due to the analogy it makes. I was not really aware of that until I was ‘hurt’ as a minority. I thought that the representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks could well be similar to what I was exposed to. Have I been representing the other people in the way that I am disturbed by? I needed to question and rediscover myself—both as the individual and as the larger community. Therefore, I decided to conduct this research in a way what Inayatullah and the contributors to Autobiographical International Relations regard as “reengagement of the “I” (...) while sustaining theoretical precision and historical awareness” (2011a). Just as Edkins realized while she was studying physics that “there is no world out there” (2011), I became aware of the fact that the representation of the Other I am interested in is not an object that I can grasp, but it is a structure that I live within. Moreover, I had to admit that the research will inevitably and naturally be my research that is shaped through my experiences of representation, or as Inayatullah calls, my “wounds and fears” (2011b). In short, the I as a social being implanted itself in what I study since the very beginning. Concerning this, I had two options: I could make myself obvious or disguise and ignore a major component of my research. I chose the former.
Representation of the Other, as other elements of human life, is “far more remarkable and more complex than what our theories can permit or carry” (Inayatullah 2011b, 2). We need accounts that at least emphasize the individuals as subjects of the issue that we are interested in, and underline the scholar as rooted in the process of representation. Our studies should leave space for the I of the researcher/author. In studying or ‘living’ the representation of the Other among my self, the autobiographical aspects, my journeys between my past and present, and my inquiry of my self have been highly influential. Therefore, if I am asked to briefly define what my research has been and what this dissertation is, it is an “autobiographical IR” (Inayatullah 2011a) account through a script of “chorography” and “mystery” (Pearson 2006). Unlike the popular (auto)biographical accounts of our discipline such as Journeys through the World Politics (Kruzel and Rosenau 1989), my dissertation reflects the early phases of an (junior) IR scholar’s ‘social’—including the private and the professional—life. It combines the personal with the interpretive fieldwork.

“Methods are not methodically neutral” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012) and my study is not an exception to this. Each method of ‘collecting,’ ‘producing,’ or ‘co-generating’ data/information/stories relies on the assumption choices researchers make. My study is co-generation of information through interpretive methods called “native ethnography” (Narayan 1993) or “at-home ethnography” (Alvesson 2009, Leap 1996), and un-structured daily language interviews (Schaffer 2006). Before describing my research journey, let me briefly describe its fundamentals. I do not think it is necessary to discuss these matters in detail since interpretive approach has been impressively discussed previously. Nor is there any reason, I believe, to discuss whether it is a
legitimate way of research in social sciences. However, for those who are rather new to the methodological discussions in social sciences, let me briefly point out the fundamentals of interpretive approach.

Political Science and my particular specialization, IR, have been dominated by positivist approaches that assume the presence of a ‘real’ world that we can grasp and collect data about through systematic studies. It is the approach I was socialized into when I was in college. Other alternatives of conducting research or generating data have been accused of falling short of producing objective knowledge—at least in the institutions and literature I was familiar with. However, contrary to popular judgment, several pioneering scholars, who are cited for supporting a single, true, and an objective way of conducting rigorous IR research, emphasized certain aspects of international relations that are in line with the presumptions of interpretive methodology.

I had never considered, for instance, Morgenthau beyond his book *Politics among Nations* (1978). It might sound inexplicable but he had always been an image of a book: not breathing, a blurry image that was not carved into the shape of a human being. He was *Politics among Nations*, as if the book was produced in a factory with the brand *Morgenthau*. I came to realize that he was more than that when we were distributed a snapshot from Morgenthau’s life. My memory of the picture is less clear than it was when I first held the handout sitting in our graduate level *Introduction to IR Theory* class. Initially, I could not comprehend what the picture was all about. Simply, it was a picture from a graduation ceremony somewhere in Germany; a commencement ceremony Morgenthau had to stay on the margins because of his Jewish identity. My positivist side, in fact, asked, “Where the hell am I? Can’t we just start discussing the
book?” As the discussion, which I further became fonder of, developed, I asked myself, “He wrote a book like Politics among Nations, because? Because he had always been in the middle of power politics?” I was on the verge of a new IR.

I further found out that it is ‘the same Morgenthau’ whose Scientific Man vs. Power Politics (1946) is recalled in supporting the notion that is deeply skeptical of Political Science’s aspirations to science (Wedeen 2007, 10). Moreover, Morgenthau was not the only pioneering IR scholar that is misrepresented or selectively represented to junior IR students or scholars. For instance, as Oren (2006a, 79) explains, E.H. Carr (2001), indicates, “political science itself is part of the social world in which human beings are embedded and about which they reflect.” “So,” I said, “there can be other IRs around. Not only the positivist.” Later, related to my disciplinary inquiry, I became familiar with Interpretive Approach; an approach that mainly stands against the monopoly of ‘scientific’ understanding of Political Science and expands the number of ‘legitimate’ means of systematic analysis. Simply, an approach that “brackets the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the [positivist] enterprise” (Wedeen 2007, 7).

Challenging the monopoly of the positivist approach in Social Sciences, interpretive research focuses on “specific, situated meaning and meaning-making practices of actors in a given context” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Aiming at, Yanow (2006b, 11) points out, “understanding from within” (Verstehen) or relating to context-specific meanings and actors’ understanding in certain settings, interpretive researchers mostly rely on “abductive reason” or “abductive logic.” Especially apparent in research projects that utilize methods such as ethnography, Yanow (2009, 34-35), referring to Saunders, indicates that “abductive reasoning begins by registering the
presence of a puzzle, of something surprising, and then seeking to explicate it.”

Interpretive studies generally focus on a community’s traditions, practices, language, and other cultural elements that provide the material out of which individuals craft their meaning making of everyday events (Yanow 2006b, 11).

Interpretive approaches highlight the importance of meaning-making, which is viewed as the distinctive feature of interpretive research. The *sine qua non* of interpretive approach is thought to be the *sensitivity* and it is the focus on meaning-making (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). The importance of individuals’ meaning-making within a particular world—or space and time—necessitates the interpretive researchers to be attentive to the structures encompassing the process of meaning-making. In other words, it is important to acknowledge that “sense making is a historically and socially contextualized process and that the subject of study is itself historically and socially situated” (Yanow 2006b, 10).

If sensitivity to meaning-making process is what makes interpretive approach distinctive, then what is meaning-making? It is agreed that the process of sense making is an iterative process. Prior experiences shape one’s understanding of new experiences, and new understanding from these experiences itself may refine a priori knowledge brought to bear subsequent experiences (Yanow 2006b, 13). Prior knowledge, which individuals ‘being studied’ or ‘lived together,’ and scholars hold, plays crucial roles in the process of meaning-making. The prior knowledge of the individuals can compose of their traditions, language, professional lives, personal characteristics, education, belief systems, and many other aspects of being a human. Scholars are not exceptions. Their backgrounds and each aspect of being a human might matter in their
process of meaning-making, and this makes reflexive research exceedingly relevant to our science.

Reflexive research, modifying Oren’s (2006b, 218) definition of “reflexive political science,” is a research that takes into account the historical, personal, social, political positions of its own researcher. In other words, scholars might proceed in meaning-making with similar prior knowledge that the subjects of their study have. However, we, as scholars, might have other extra burden or knowledge we carry with us to the specific contexts we are interested in. In addition to being ordinary human beings, our theoretical and conceptual frameworks can be our ‘professional baggage’ that influences our comprehension. Then, how does interpretive approach incorporate the issue of concepts scholars have knowledge of before they get involved in the field?

Scholars direct our attention to the idea that observation and ‘facts’ are theory-laden and what most regard to be objective ‘facts’ can be, if not affected, shaped by the researcher or the observer (Oren 2003, Yanow 2006b). Hence, our conceptual frameworks matter and they should be stressed in the course of research. Nonetheless, it is argued that interpretive research designs do not define key concepts before a research begins (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). They are developed in the field. They emerge from the field in a bottom-up fashion rather than a priori concept formation (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2006). However, before the field study, we are well aware of the presence of what Geertz (1983, 57) termed “experience distant” concepts, which are the ones “that specialists of one sort or another (...) employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims.”
Related to not relying on prior concepts, interpretive studies do not test formalized hypotheses. Because interpretive methodologies rest on local knowledge, interpretive research designs commonly do not specify formal hypotheses that a study is expected to falsify or support in a single, definite test (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2006). However, again, scholars might carry their expectations that might be constituted by the scholarly discussion they are familiar with and their experiences forming their research puzzles. This is not a problem. In fact, the tension between expectations and the field experiences is the source of the surprises that many interpretive studies craft enhanced accounts through.

Finally, those surprises researchers might encounter give another distinctive feature to interpretive studies. They are usually sources of ambiguity and in interpretive methodology, the ambiguity and plasticity of meaning-making are usually considered as creating the possibility of multiple interpretations of acts, events, settings, and so forth (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2006). As knowledge can be for different purposes and for different individuals or entities, their understanding of a given concept, issue, event, or artifact can be different and in various cases can contradict each other.

These features or ontological assumptions form the framework of my study which A research and writing practice about a ‘self-containing’ topic or social practice such as representation of the Other is better captured by practices of chorography and mystery, both of which I became familiarized with through the volume edited by Inayatullah, Autobiographical International Relations. Pearson, whom Inayatullah draws upon, defines chorography as providing templates for the smaller-scale phenomena (2006, 9). He argues, “chorographic writing creates complex and unexpected relations from and
within the landscape of the autobiographical subject, through processes analogous to non-linear, hyper textual linkage" (2006, 9). As Inayatullah (2011b, 18) relates to the study of international relations, in chorographic writing, Pearson (2006, 9) indicates, “The accent is on creativity, leading to new forms of research and new kinds of text, from the author’s specific position in the time and space of culture.” In addition to this, “the chorographer writes with paradigms, not arguments” (2006, 9), which is parallel to the interest in trends in interpretive approach.

Mystory, which Inayatullah considers more relevant to autobiographical international relations, is the combination of “three kinds of discourse: personal, popular and expert” in which “pattern is favored over argument” (Pearson 2006, 9). Building his definition on Ulmer’s (1994) account in *Heuretics: The Logic of Invention*, Pearson (2006, 9) suggests that “mystory blurs the boundary between critical and creative writing, autobiography and cultural history (...): the author is located within an intertextual network of cultural references”.

What I do in this study is “chorographic” writing/research that entails creating “mystory.” It is creative in the sense that I combine the personal or the autobiographical with fieldwork of observing, interacting, and living more obvious cases of representation of the Other from the position of an IR professional that carried his experience-distance concepts or off-the-field knowledge during his research journey and transformed into the pages of this dissertation. This study is briefly of my personal, popular, and expertise.

**Prior Knowledge: Disciplining Literature**

Research questions and puzzles can stem from different sources. They sometimes come from the scholarly literature or sometimes from scholars’ everyday human experiences—our “own histories and lives; particular gender, race-ethnic or
other perspectives, prior professions or occupations, volunteer positions, and activities that span the possibilities from religion to sports” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). And, sometimes the scholarly literature and our life experiences interact in crafting or uncovering research puzzles. Our expectations about human acts or the dynamics of the social and political life, our observations or experiences, history, and countless other personal traits may create tensions; our expectations and experiences might not match (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, Yanow 2009, 35).

If I am asked “Where does my IR come from?” (Hülsse 2011), I would respond: my ‘current’ IR comes from the representation of the Other that I live and read about. The puzzle that attracted my attention and helped me formulate my research questions was an outcome of my experiences, observations and living in international relations. Although I tried to identify as a student of IR during different phases of my professional socialization, I have realized that “there is no escaping from my personal history” (2011).

To share the early stages of my research is as helpful as sharing my personal for the reader to grasp my research experience to a larger extent. The joy, ambition, and frustration resulted from deciding what to do and how to do is, I believe, one of the most important aspects of conducting research. However, before getting into details of my research, I would like to share the literature that has shaped my prior knowledge and experience-distant understanding of the representation of the Other.

As Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) explain, literature reviews are indicators of the discussion that we would like to be a part of. Consequently, the first set of studies that caught my attention was mainly about theorization and conceptualization of the
representation of the Other. They were studies suggesting primary premises that would lead further theoretical discussions or empirical analyses.

Having read extracts from Hall’s (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Mitchell’s (1990) chapter “Representation,” and Todorov’s ([1982] 1999) pioneering book *The Conquest of America: the Question of the Other*, I entered the world of theoretical discussions. My personal inquiry initiated by Maalouf’s (2000) *In the Name of Identity* advanced one step further. My initial impression with the issue of the representation of Other was that it is commonly related to the idea of “the production of meaning through language” (Hall 1997, 16). For many, representation of the Other is the construction of who and what the other is through language. However, studying representation has not been limited to mere focus on language. It has been, instead, incorporated in what Foucault defined as discourse (Hall 1997, Mitchell 1990). As a result, representation of the Other is frequently regarded as the production of who and what the Other is via speech and text. In other words, it is thought as assigning meaning to an entity through human acts and artifacts. This is the leading understanding that has advanced the application of methods such as discourse analysis in studying representation of the Other.

Discourse analysis and similar methods form the mainstream representation studies. They are regarded as allowing enhanced comprehension of creation, use, and diffusion of discourse by agency within a structure. “Foucault was interested in,” Hall (1997, 43-44) argues, “the production of knowledge through what he called discourse rather than language. His project was to analyze how human beings understand themselves [and the Other] in our culture and how knowledge about social, the
embodied individual, and shared meanings come to be produced in different periods.”

Representation of the Other, which is a specific case of discourse, never consists of just one statement, one text, on action, or one source. It is an institution. It is what Mitchell (1990) calls an “institutionalized system of knowledge.” The same discourse, or the characteristics of the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time—what Foucault called the episteme—will appear across range of texts, and forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within society (Hall 1997, 44).

‘Foucault,’ ‘episteme,’ ‘institutionalized system of knowledge …’ I did not know where I was going. All I knew, I was off the shore of my mainstream IR. It was adventurous. So was it tenderly troubling. From time to time, I had flashbacks from my college years.

I was a sophomore. During one of my theory classes, our professor advised, “If you are looking for a box to jump in and stay safe, you’ll be disappointed. There is no ‘fit-for-all’ in IR. You’ll find no theory that explains all. No approach can give you the solace you are looking for at the end of the confusion you are all in.” On the same day, right after our theory class, I had one of my favorite classes: Research Methods by one of my role model professors.

Research Methods taught us that the ‘safe’ or the sole box in IR was positivism. In the same class, I remember, some other students from other departments ‘attempting to’ discuss Foucault. They were laughed at or advised to discuss ‘other topics’ in ‘other classes.’ They were even harshly joked about during the recess. They were academically bullied.
I remembered these memories on the days when I started reading so-called not-IR literature. I became afraid of betraying my roots. Even worse, I was afraid of being bullied. I was already confused and this fear was not really helping. Luckily, I came across many other brilliantly crafted works on representation of the Other that helped me digest what I had put on my plate at the academic table.

Among these inspiring studies that include exploration of historical narratives and texts, or deconstructing the accounts of major philosophers and their influence, Todorov’s ([1982] 1999) *The Conquest of America*, I believe, is one of the most prevalent accounts. Similarly, Nandy’s (1988) *The Intimate Enemy: Loss of Recovery of Self under Colonialism* deserves praise for the robust insight into the dynamics of construction and consequences of systems of representation of the Other with a focus on power alignment among and within communities. These two studies encouraged me in developing my research project by clarifying certain premises that I was trying to comprehend and by portraying bold examples of representation of the Other.

One of the leading trends among studies built on the premise of representation of the Other as an institutionalized knowledge is the case-specificity or context-sensitivity. Most of the studies, except the ones that clarified assumptions regarding or definitions of representation [of the Other], rely on the idea that Othering is a complex and constitutive process that it necessitates case specificity. The topic is “so enormous that any general formulation [of representation of the Other] soon ramifies into countless categories and directions” (Todorov [1982] 1999, 3). For this reason, single case studies have been more feasible or reasonable.
Reading case-specific accounts of representation of Other, I have realized that the context-sensitivity of the topic did not hinder the acceptance of certain general premises. Although, there was no ‘systematic’ comparison of various cases in a single study, some presumptions appeared to ‘travel across cases.’ For instance, regardless of who the other or how different the level of otherness is, it is predominantly agreed that an Other is also a subject (a self), whom only someone’s (a self) point of view separates and authentically distinguishes from the self (Todorov [1982] 1999, 3). It is agency that co-constitutes the self and the Other within a given context. Actors, their interactions and the context can vary. This gives the representation of the Other or othering a structure—not necessarily a unique one—that is difficult to formulate or generalize.

Studying how the Other has been portrayed—especially portrayal in the Western or allegedly developed communities’ voyages in exploring the ‘new’ lands—it took my attention that it is not unusual to see the emphasis on the inferiority and the beast-like features of the ‘discovered societies’ or the Others. Describing the new encounters by referring to one’s own discourse and locating the others within an existing body of knowledge is also a common propensity. Descriptions of the others are rarely exploration or discovery of an unknown. They are assigning/extracting meanings or roles to the Other from already existing institutions of representation—usually containing references to inferiority, lack of civility, brutality, or non-humanity. Columbus’s stories of discovery, his depictions of the new world and its people were clear examples of this portrayal that I find quite striking (Greenblatt 1992, Todorov [1982] 1999). In the same vein, Al-Mas‘udis’s, the Herodotus of the Arabs, portrayal of the West—which I came across while conducting research to write a paper for one of the ISA
conventions—as barbarians, cold in nature and beast-like creatures (Pipes 1983) is another illustration of extracting meaning for the Others from an existing knowledge. They were extracts supported by religious sources or ancestral teachings. This indicates how the Other is often predetermined. Explorers, for instance, were not seeking new lands to explore. They were uncovering new people and lands that were supposed to confirm their own institutionalized knowledge.

This made me ask: “If so, let’s turn the table. Did I move to the States expecting to be othered with an emphasis on my differences? Did I already expect to become more Turkish? Did I ‘instinctively’ turn into a more Turkish person other than being a PhD student?” My answer was a direct no. It was my honest answer. Still, I had my doubts. Choosing to study Turkey as a case for a research paper might have been the reason I started to be seen more Turkish. Maybe not! I still strive to find an answer. However, one thing I am quite sure of is that in most of the situations I found myself powerless: Powerless to break the structure and stand against the pictures on the minds of the people.

Power, I believe, mattered. Similarly, scholars have been concerned with the power or ability to describe or represent the new or the ‘discovered’ as one of the most important dynamics of representation of the Other. Columbus, equipped with the power of discovering the new, had also the ability to produce or prove the knowledge about the Other for his ‘self.’ That power was “not only negative and repressing what it seeks to control, but also productive” (Hall 1997, 50). The discoverer had the ability or capability to control and represent what and whom they met and the implications of their capacity was negative.
Theoretical discussions and discourse analyses of specific cases are predominantly occupied with the investigation of the powerful. In these studies, the discourse of the powerful is the dominant factor in constituting the self and the Other. The weaker parties are usually considered mere subjects to be influenced or represented by the powerful. For instance, Columbus’s discourse is thought to be highly immune to the effect of the discovered land and its inhabitant. With exceptional studies such as Nandy’s (1988) analysis of the colonized societies as decision makers playing important role in construction of knowledge systems, scholars largely ignore the role of the weaker.

For my personal reasons or coping with the personal wounds, the focus on power and its explanatory power in how certain societies are able to represent the Other was a flawless answer. Sometimes being the weaker or the victim of the representation is easier to accept than to admit being a failed ‘change-seeker.’ However, we should not necessarily take relatively weaker groups into account as meaningless or less salient than the stronger parties. A society creates its reality by the images they maintain. They interpret their surrounding and behave accordingly. Doty (1996) reminds us that representation does not uncover “truth” and “knowledge” but rather the “regimes of truth and knowledge…through which we have come to know the world and its inhabitants, and [which] have enabled and justified certain practices and policies.” It is regimes of truth that legitimize action and guide further possibilities (Dunn 2003). Although a weaker party may not have the power to incur the implications of its discourse on the powerful as immediate, as far reaching, or as consequential as their prevailing counterparts might, their discourse is still considerable because their implications can
prevail in the long-run or in non-conventional paths. Today’s weaker preserving a discourse that humiliates and dehumanizes an Other can be future’s commanding power.

Related to power, another question I kept asking reading the pioneering works was: “Where is the people?” The main concern of the representation studies has usually been the ‘high’ or ‘key’ figures. Most of the studies focus on agents that are capable of producing texts, memories, and recorded speeches available for researchers. They overlook the daily practices of ‘regular’ individuals. This might be partially due to the fact that the ordinary are incapable of producing artifacts accessible by the researchers. However, as Said (1993) indicated, we should regard the society [the ordinary] as the locale in which ideas and identities are continuously contested. As in the case of European membership of Turkey and preferences of governments of resorting to referendum to decide whether Turkey belongs to the European self or not, the public perception or the images of the Other can have remarkable implications. The public can imagine the ‘real’ borders of European society as excluding Turkey and have ‘real’ impact on vital policy decisions. Therefore, researchers should pay more attention to the public or the ordinary in representation of the Other than they have paid so far.

The idea that people extract meanings from an already existing systems of representation and Said's point of people as the locale contesting ideas seem to contradict each other. If the representations are extracted from an already given set of knowledge, how or to what extent the people contest those? Predetermined meaning of the Other for the Self can and should be problematized. Todorov ([1982] 1999) indicates that on several occasions the conquerors resorted to their knowledge of the Bible to
characterize what they saw in the new lands. I agree that “human beings can construct according to archetypes” (Eliade 1959, 10) and religion can be a source of reference points people use in describing their Other. Still, we should be receptive to the possibility of many other archetypes that are local for people’s everyday use. They can be traditions, oral literature, movies, documentaries, social media, online images, and countless others. I do not argue that the focus of historical analyses on religious references are misleading or lack plausibility. In fact, to criticize historical accounts on the basis of their indifference to alternative reference points such as movies or oral history would be demanding an absurd case of oxymoron. Such sources of representation were not extant in the aforementioned cases of representation of the Other—i.e. social media—or they are manageably accessible by the researcher—i.e. oral stories that were never recorded. My intention is not a critique or attempt of delegitimizing the historical accounts. Instead, I believe we expand the scope of our researches. We should involve ourselves in agents’ preferences of archetypes or reference points. We should try to understand which choices of reference points ‘we’ make. We should pay attention to how some scratches on our, on their minds prevail among many other alternatives.

With the ideas on definitions of representation of the Other, the [possible] roles of the weaker parties in representation, and the role of power in enabling domination of certain systems of representation, I continued with the works of Orientalism and Occidentalism. Besides their being the most popular components of the representation literature, my particular interest in ordinary representation among the ordinary Turks
initiated my interest in literatures on the relationship between the West and the East—I use East and West due to the lack of a better terminology.

I started with Said’s (1978) eminent book *Orientalism* on which various studies have been built on. I had never read Edward Said in detail before. At least, nor for research purposes. Reading him and other Orientalism studies with a focus on representation of the Other meant something different. I was seeking answers for definitional problems, dynamics of representation of the other, and the role of agents in creating and maintaining systems of knowledge.

The general trend in this literature has been to start with the assumptions or the foundations of the Western ontology about the Orient, especially the Islamic world, to which attention was taken particularly in Said’s works (Said 1978, 1981). Topics ranging from how the Middle East has been defined as different geographical regions in line with the changing interest and power configuration within the West (Adelson 1995, Held, Held, and Held 1989) to Western perceptions about the Middle Easterner or Arabs in the West (Amanat and Bernhardsson 2007, Kamalipour 1995, Suleiman 1988) have been prevalently discussed. Several studies discussed the impact of media in generating or maintaining systems of representation of the Middle East. Critical narratives of the history of the relationship between the two parties have been also studied to understand the structural settings generating definitions of the Other in the Western hemisphere.

Studies of Orientalism generally deal with a ‘regime of truth.’ According to Foucault, Hall summarizes (1997, 49), “when power operates so as to enforce the ‘truth’ of any set of statements, such a discursive formation produces a regime of truth.”
Orientalism is one of the great instances of regime of truth. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said analyzes the discourse and institutions that constructed and produced the “Orient.” He calls this discourse “Orientalism.” Said (1978, 3) explains his aim in *Orientalism*:

> My contention is that, without examining Orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism, the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity “the Orient” is in question. (…) This book also tried to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.

Said (1978, 41-42) argues, “… in a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly … held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and unifying set of values proven in various ways to be affective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see the Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics.” As Said clearly specifies, discursive formation or regimes of truth can put limits on the ideas of people. They can define an Other that shaped people’s further thinking, norms, ideas, attitudes and interaction. However, I kept thinking why are people or their need for information are considered to be passively embedded in the system? Why are individuals usually considered limited
by discourse? Why are their roles in choosing reference points, daily perpetuations of images and their strengthening the regimes of truth undervalued?

When I was working on ‘public approval of Islamist’ one of the starting points was a fish-pool and radical-ordinary analogy. I believe the same is applicable to my inquiry on representation of the other among the ordinary. Mao offers that the radicals can be considered as the fish and the people are like the pool that the fish can survive within (Tse-Tung 2000, 92-93). Although it does not necessarily need to be the case, let us assume for a moment that each statement of truth is a radical member of a discursive structure. For those radicals to survive, people should believe in them. They should provide the habitat for their survival. The media, key political actors, scholars, or principal public figures can be all important in enforcing the strength of the limits on the thoughts of the ordinary. However, as Boulding (1956, 5-6) asserts, what actors believe to be true is the reality governing their behavior. If a regime of truth contains the statement: “nation A is morally inferior,” it is the individuals that will believe whether it is true or not. As far as they do so, then it is a reality having impact. Nation A will be inferior and treated accordingly.

In the Orientalism literature, the belief or the realities of some sectors of a society are studied. Yet, scholars of orientalism commonly discount the public, ordinary individuals, or daily life practices. In several cases, we read the reflexive nature of their studies. They comment on daily or professional encounters during which they are represented by the structure that they analyze in their studies (See i.e. Said 1981). Still, a systematic study of daily life practices of representation of the Other has not flourished. The general tendency in this component of the literature has been to study
‘above public’ dynamics that influence daily life practices of many. Therefore, those ordinary people who are capable of believing in the truth of certain images and creating realities that would shape remarkable aspects of politics can be one of the promising research themes in our studies.

Having started to build an in-depth interest in the West as the signifier and the East as signified, I revisited the literature of Occidentalism, which I first got familiarized during my exchange student year in University of Amsterdam. It was 2006 and we were supposed to submit a research paper for our Political Islam course. The course material on the murder of Theo van Gogh by a radical Islamist was probably the most interesting topic for me by then. I had relatives in the Netherlands and was assigned housing in a neighborhood ‘famous’ for its immigrant population. I had several chances to talk to so many Turkish-Dutch citizens, and tried to understand why so many of them had a dislike for the country they were receiving benefits and better life standards than they could have got in Turkey. I started to read on Occidentalism for my paper that tried to explain the dislike of immigrants that I partially explained as a security dilemma created by the Dutch government.

If I use Orientalism as my reference point, Occidentalism is basically the switched roles of the ‘West’ and the ‘East.’ The latter becomes the signifier and the former the signified. In this literature, for instance, instead of Arabs in the minds of the “West,” studies focus on the Arab representation of the “West.” They analyze similar topics with methods such discourse analysis within a critical historical framework (El-Enany 2006). Various other regions’—such as Asia or Far East—perceptions of the
West are also among the main topics (Buruma 2006, Buruma and Margalit 2004, Carrier 1995, Doležel 1990).

Among numerous studies, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* by Buruma and Margalit (2004) is an exemplary study that illuminates the general trends within the literature. The authors start their analysis of how the West is portrayed “in the eyes of its enemies” with a special focus on the history of the relationship between Japan and the West. They maintain their analysis of the interaction between “modernity” and its counterparts all over the world by examining long-lasting images. They evaluate the maintenance of images through deep-rooted stereotypes and prejudices among communities that are thought to be the enemies of the West. The authors argue that the West, especially among Islamic Jihadist groups, is portrayed by images that refer to the sinfulness and rootlessness of urban life; the corruption of the human spirit in a materialistic, market-driven society; and the loss of organic community. Those images, the authors indicate, form “Occidentalism.” The authors do not argue for the presence of a clash of civilizations by the long-lasting images. However, they sustain the idea of deeply rooted tension between the East and the West.

My study focusing on the representation of the Other among ordinary Turks can be considered as a research in Occidentalism since I focus on a ‘supposedly’ Eastern society. It can be easily stated that for the Turks, the West is the enemy. The West and the East are blurry demarcations that are constituted in accordance with the dynamics of world politics. In spite of the vagueness, this categorization has become a mental shortcut that is extensively used in both academic and daily life. However, the apparent weaknesses in Occidentalism and my approach to the issue clearly distinguish my
project from the general trends in the literature of Occidentalism in several important ways.

First, the categorization of societies as Eastern and Western can be practical solutions for definitional problems most research projects have to deal with. Pre-defined concepts and priori-knowledge are always present in our research projects. However, as I clarify later, I abstain from defining certain societies as Western or Eastern. Adopting an interpretive approach and believing that information is co-constituted by the researcher and the informants, I allow these term to be defined in the field. That is, instead of defining Turkish images of its Other, which does not have to be West alone, as Occidentalism, I leave space for those concepts to gain shape the field.

Second, the literature on Occidentalism mostly regards the images as prejudices. However, they should be regarded as individual beliefs that create realities. If objectivity is one of the main presumptions of most of the scholars of Occidentalism, the word prejudice is not accurate. Prejudice simply means making a decision before becoming aware of the relevant facts of a case. If we judge perceptions as prejudices that does not capture a reality—or to be more accurate ‘our own reality’—then it is subjective. It is subjective on the basis that our own perceptions define the value of the Others’ images. I have to admit that while in the field, I wanted to dismiss some images I encountered as ‘simple prejudices.’ However, spending time with the people and trying to get a sense of the bigger picture those images combine into, I noticed that it is an over-simplification to evaluate people’s representations as simple prejudices.

Finally, a common weakness of “Occidentalism” is that societies are implicitly assumed as ‘unitary actors.’ The underlying assumptions for such an approach is not
clear. Nonetheless, it is obvious that in most of the studies, such as the ones focusing on the images in the Arab mind, actors are regarded as unified. This might be due to the limited scope of discourse analyses. The signifier is studied within different time and space dimensions, usually with a focus on variation across different structures. Yet, the society is not considered as composed of different individuals that might generate different trends of representation of the Other. Indeed, there are studies that include variation in perception of the Other in accordance with the personal backgrounds of their informants (Ahiska 2003). Nonetheless, these studies do not acknowledge the complexity of the self. They reduce the Other and the self to broad brush stroked images without showing any interest in how certain trends of representation of the Other are more prevalent in various situations. As my fieldwork suggests, there are certain trends of representation of the Other that is common among people. Still, the immense diversity of the images on the minds of the ordinary Turks, the bundle of complex signifiers, and partiality of othering in different cases suggest that taking societies as unified actors is a misleading notion.

As I indicated earlier, we, as scholars, refer to the literature that we are familiar with and that we want to be part of. Although I used ethnography, I am not an anthropologist. My professionalization is in IR and I want to contribute to the discussions in IR literature. For this purpose, I went through the IR literature to sketch the place othering or representation of the Other has found in IR. I believe, how and why we read a study matters. We might highlight a sentence today as the most striking idea in a book and take a note of another different page as the most important contribution of the book depending on what our research is in the future. At least this was the case for me.
Going through my old stacks of articles or picking up my ‘classical’ IR books from my bookshelf once more, the lenses I wore this time were the color of representation of the Other.

In IR, scholars have shown interest in the issue of identity and the perception of the Other in world politics, especially in foreign policy analysis. Several studies under the influence of attribution theory and cognitive consistency that made their impact on the discipline of IR in the 1960s and 1970s—indicated the importance of perceptions of the actors in world politics (Neumann 1999). Perceptions are used to comprehend the underlying reasons of decisions that are thought not fit the rationality expectations of parsimonious accounts.

Challenging the ontological grounds of ‘mainstream’ IR theories, approaches such as constructivism have broadened the scope of the discipline and assigned a greater role for identity, perceptions or other ideational factors in world politics. Constructivism, in general, and studies advanced with the encouraging developments in the discipline postulated that social dynamics such as actors’ identities and interests are indeed in a constitutive relationship with the general structure that they are embedded within. Scholars started to inquire “what makes the world hang together” (Ruggie 1998) or how the current elements of IR have achieved their meanings (Wendt 1998). Social structures such as identities, perceptions, cultures, norms or belief systems in inter-society or inter-actor relations took their places in the discipline.

Problematising, for instance, the national interest, scholars indicated how each states’ security concerns can be constituted and reconstituted in accordance with the context the actors locate themselves (Katzenstein 1996). Societies, nations or different
communities have been regarded as continuously reconstituting their identities that are not fixed but endogenous to structure (Dittmer and Kim 1993). In addition to the studies discussing how national interests can be constituted by the identity or the culture of the communities, it is also discussed that national interest or politics can also change the content of culture or actors’ perception of their counterparts. Whether “Culture is independent of national Security” or not has been questioned and it is discussed how enemies “are made” in, particularly US, politics (Oren 2000, 2003, 2006b). The process of perceiving or creating the Other became to be regarded as more than how positivist or mainstream approaches have taken them into account.

With the developments in the field especially after the end of Cold War, new perspectives on how actors’ perceptions can be important in world politics emerged as a well-grounded research area. These brought IR in the contiguity of representation or portrayal of the Other in world politics. Among the most prominent studies in the proximity of both IR and the topic of representation of the Other, Neumann’s studies are highly germane to my current research. According to Neumann (1999), world politics or international relations are constructed in the form of relations between self and Other. Like Todorov ([1982] 1999), Neumann indicates the necessity of historical aspect of constructing the self and Other. For him, the self and the other are constitutive that there is always a tendency to produce the meaning of the self through the presence of or demarcating an Other (1999, 21-25).

Besides the co-constitutive relationship between the self and the other, geographical proximity and spatial distance is argued to be important in the process of othering. As Buzan and Wæver (2003, 46) also take our attention, Neumann indicates
that although we believe that closer spatial distance would encourage communities to know each other better and hence othering less, there is evidence for the contrary. He argues that because of subjective use of cultural differences and the reliance of the self on the other for its existence, even minor differences can be used for reference points to exclude an Other from the self (1999, 34-35). Therefore, regardless of the closeness—both spatial and cultural—the tendency of the individuals or societies in othering or demarcating is a sine qua non of international relations.

The space that othering find in international relations does not mean that the boundaries between the self and the other are extremely rigid that there is no common understanding between allegedly different communities. Neumann acknowledges that sympathy or empathy are distinct behaviors that might result in acts of engaging or closing the gaps between communities. The systems of knowledge about the Other and the acts of sympathy and empathy can be linked in various ways and this linkage, Neumann (1999, 34-35) argues, can explain the contradiction between the rigid self-other distinction and engaging behaviors. Therefore, clear demarcations and enmity can co-exist with friendly relations, each of which can be present in different realms of international relations at the same time.

As Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002, 125-126) agree, Neumann argues that systems of knowledge about the Other can be constantly modified. Institutionalized systems of knowledge are modified in situations when the actors find themselves and their perception of the Other in contradiction (1999, 218-219). Othering can take a new form by creating new differences, or turning already existing minor demarcations into major ones. Sometimes, modifications might not be sufficient to maintain the ontological
separation of a self and an Other. This might necessitate a new system of representation. In need of a new comprehensive set of knowledge of the other and the self, new images emphasizing the differences are created or emphasized \(\text{(Laclau 2005)}\).

As the historical account Todorov \([1982] 1999\) masterfully depicts, othering can involve placing the self above the Other, humiliation, and sometimes dehumanization. Othering often contains views and actions that place the self above the Other \(\text{(Hansen 2006)}\). However, placing the self above the Other for differentiation is not a necessary component of othering \(\text{(Diez 2005, 628-629)}\). Emphasizing differences with no respect to superiority or inferiority, on the other hand, is a defining feature of othering.

Finally, the role of researchers in othering receives attention in IR discussions of the representation of the Other \(\text{(Neumann 1999, Reinke de Buitrago 2012)}\). Neumann \(\text{(1999, 36)}\), regarding the researcher as the observer, indicates that we, as researchers, are active participants of othering. He sees it worth to gain an understanding of how the observer—or the researcher—takes part in othering processes in terms of the way she portrays her self and other \(\text{(1999, 36)}\). He indicates, we are involved in a normative endeavor that our analyses should aim at creating insights that would enforce peaceful co-existence of different group \(\text{(1999, 37)}\).

The interest in representation of the Other in IR has elucidated different dynamics of the process of othering and instructed us with essentials of the self-other relationship in international relations. However, research on representation of the Other in IR can be subjected to two main criticisms. The first aspect having been undermined by these studies is the role of the ordinary. Similar to the broader literature on
representation of the Other, IR showed great interest in studying the key actors at the expense of the interest in the role of the people. IR as a discipline has been dominated by the studies of certain topics to help the ordinary people (Hill 1999). However, the interest in incorporating the dynamics of the lives of the ordinary has been exceptionally limited.

The second undervalued aspect is viewing the scholars as belonging to a self or as actors within the systems of representations but not incorporating this in the studies. Although it is a matter of choice of assumptions about the nature of the social sciences and not necessarily a mistake in conducting research in IR, most of the scholars considered the self as isolated from the ‘subject’ they study. Reflexive nature of research especially in the theme of representation of Other is undervalued. As I discussed, the study of representation of the Other can be more promising, if scholars incorporate their roles in the process of representation or make use of their active participations in the practice of representation or othering.

The literature of representation of the Other—Conceptualization, Orientalism, and Occidentalism—and the Other and IR have undeniably provided insightful perspectives about representation of the Other. With their weaknesses, the literature essentially shaped my a priori knowledge. They shaped my understanding of the important factors for my analysis. As I elaborated in detail, interpretive research relies on different presumptions such as abductive knowledge or not-testing hypothesis. These assumptions are mostly construed that interpretive studies are less likely to pay close attention to previous studies. However, interpretive studies are not loose-canons. For interpretive studies, previous accounts are at least as important as they can be for
any other approach/study. Therefore, it is somewhat vital to summarize what are the main teachings of the studies I locate my study within and I believe I contribute to.

One of the foremost statements numerous previous studies have stressed is that representation of the Other is an institution. It is not only a word, an assertion, or a speech. It is a complex system of countless human acts and artifacts that are difficult to generalize about or create a parsimonious categorization for. As Orientalism studies particularly emphasized, representation of the Other is a regime of truth or a discourse that travels across time and space. It is a constitutive process or institutionalized system of knowledge in which self and the other gains meaning through demarcations or processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Another notable feature of representation of the Other is that othering or representation of the other usually includes highlighting or creating inferior features of the ones that does not belong the self. Dehumanization and humiliation of the other entities is thought to be common. Powerful entities are those who generally considered having more constitutive impact on the other that is usually discovered, pictured, and treated as inferior. The new is usually replaced within an already existing knowledge system and denoted with images or signifiers the discoverer or the representing party is already familiar with. Therefore, locating representation of the other in a historical framework is helpful to have insight in the discourse of representation.

Although representation usually includes emphasizing inferiority of dehumanized aspects of the other, it does not always have to be so. A self can find superior traits of another. Moreover, the good and bad traits assigned to the Other can co-exist at the same time. In the same vein, although various images resist time, systems of
knowledge or regimes of truth can be modified or wholly replaced in accordance with the needs or situations the Self in. These two dynamics of representation of the Other, co-existence of enmity and sympathy, and modification or replacement of a long-lasting system of knowledge indicates the dynamic form representation of the Other. However, in spite of the changing figures of representation, the presence of demarcating or asserting differences between the Self and the Other is an unaltered component of international relations. In fact, demarcation is the simplest definition of what representation of the Other is, which is also regarded as *sine qua non* of international relations.

These premises or discussions raised by previous studies are descriptive and directive for further research. They form the main body of the literature that conceptualizes what representation of the Other is. They shed light on the possible dynamics of the process of Othering and provide a framework for further empirical analyses. They formed my knowledge and inquiry before I take the steps to go back “home.”

**Going Back Home**

In order to co-generate knowledge for trying to understand the process of othering, I conducted fieldtrips to Turkey to live, experience, and expose myself to the scenes of representation of Other. I used or defined my methods as at-home ethnography or native-ethnography, and unstructured daily language interviews and free-associations.

“At-home ethnography is a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a natural access and in which s/he is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. The researcher
works and/or lives in the local setting and uses the experiences to generate empirical material for research purposes” (Alvesson 2009, 159). As ethnography is more or less the “fine art of hanging out with a difference: An ethnographer doing participant-observation attempts to interpret observations and experiences systematically by looking for sociocultural patterns” (Pader 2006, 163), for this research, I 'hung out' in my home(s) and conducted 163 interviews.

After crafting the research puzzle and formulating my research questions, I have realized that I needed to go to the ‘self’ I belong to for having a better sense of the process I desired to understand. For this purpose, I prepared two trips to Turkey in the second half of 2013 and the first half of 2014. In addition to my planned field trips, numerous other visits and countless encounters of daily life contributed to the formation of this study.

As I discussed earlier, a scholar in representation of Other can experience various accounts of othering or representation in her daily or professional life. However, they might not go beyond anecdotes or they might be susceptible to an irregularity that makes them unlikely to be crafted into a systematic study. This in mind, in my fieldwork my core aim was to involve in daily life of strangers in order to have a sense of their perceptions of others, the general trend(s) of processes of othering systematically.

During my research, I intended to have a more nuanced understanding of the world from the perspective of the self or in-group members. I planned on having first-hand experience of the multiple ways in which people might define an other, the categories they use, the sources they refer to or base their perceptions on, and numerous ‘scratches’ they might reveal when they reflect on othering. During my
‘hanging out’ with the intention of “making meaning out of meaning-making of other humans” (Pachirat 2006, 374), I paid attention to “finding relations and patterns as it is central to interpretation” (Pader 2006, 166). In doing so, I was well aware of the fact that “stranger-ness” is important in ethnography to be able to problematize the normal or the natural (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, Yanow 2009, Ybema et al. 2009). For this, I produced detailed accounts of each observation, living, or experience for questioning ‘normal.’

Before the fieldwork I was aware of the fact that representation of the Other is not always easy to observe or to live within. This was a challenge I had foreseen before the fieldwork. Relying on my personal experiences, I needed to stimuli to make people talk people about the Other. The daily lives of individuals may not always contain clues about their perceptions of the Other. It generally necessitates triggers such as appearance of an Other, of whom I was hoping be perceived as a member on some occasions. I could not simply go to a mall and observe people to acquire information. This would have been waste of my resources including time. Holding a questionnaire, I could have directly asked people how they identify their self and Other. I definitely would have got response. However, it would not be a daily life experience or would not go beyond the public opinion surveys that have been conducted for decades all over the world. I needed natural conversations or experiences. However, to alleviate the risks of ‘hanging out with people’ in vain, I have also combined semi-structured ordinary language interviews with at-home-ethnography. This proved to be a successful strategy of fieldwork as my trips to Turkey coincided with significant domestic political issues that hindered some parts of my work.
During both of my fieldworks there was a constant tension between the government and people. The tension turned the major cities into the stages of civil protests. Clashes between civilians and security forces dominated some major city areas. The setback of the unfortunate events was that most people were inclined to talk about domestic politics. I sometimes found myself in an overwhelming difficulty in finding situations people converse about their other or in encountering daily practices of representation of the Other. However, the domestic politics or the unrest in the country also revealed dominant trends of representation of the Other among people such as foreign conspiracies against Turkey and the trends of internal othering, which I could only make sense after my fieldworks were over.

For the ethnographic component of my study, I traveled to several major cities and rural towns. For practical purposes I divided Turkey into two main regions: Western and Eastern. Although the division of the West and the East is ambiguous and arbitrary, I used it as a practical solution for systemizing my research. I defined the Western category as the region where highly populated cities with better communication and leisure facilities resembling a life style of the ‘West’ are located. The Anatolian or the Eastern region, on the other hand, is more ‘distant’ from the ‘West’ in terms of life style and is the space of rather limited interaction with the Other. It is a region that can be roughly described as the ‘traditional’ or the ‘Eastern.’ Defining these two regions according to my own perception of their ‘closeness’ to the ‘West,’ however, proved to be misleading. To put it differently, my classification of the regions once again proved how stereotypical the West and the East division can be.
In some cities or villages I had the chance to spend more time than others. Due to budget constraints, lack of accommodation—no hotels or a host family—and not being able to reach people easily, I had to stay in some cities less. In some extreme cases of rural residential areas, I could only stay for a few hours and had to leave after a few brief conversations. For instance, in a rural setting of Anatolia, I could talk to no one or not have had the chance to be a part of any sort of social setting since almost everyone was home due to extremely cold weather. Nor did I know anybody who would introduce me to other people in their houses. Luckily, that particular site was not my final destination, but a stop to another major city. Still, it is of importance to show how disappointing the outcomes of my efforts sometimes were.

Before starting my fieldwork, I thought that one of the major sites to socialize was traditional coffeehouse, Kahvehane (in Turkish), and ‘contemporary’ cafés. The former is a social gathering site for older male population while in the latter I hoped to meet younger and mixed population. Kahvehane, I thought, would be very easy to reach out people at. However, they became one of disappointments.

Besides my planned visits to coffeehouses and cafés, those who are familiar with Turkey might agree that there are countless occasions and places where an observer can encounter discussions about the ‘West’ and foreign societies. This was exactly the same during my fieldworks. Random places and occasions were the most rewarding experiences I had the chance to be a part of daily routine where people revealed clues about representation of the Other. Barber shops, family gatherings, marriage ceremonies and even public transportation—bus stops, taxis—were among many other places that I was evidently exposed to images of the Other. With a focus on the
research question, any moment of my visit to Turkey was in fact a probable source of understanding the perception of the Other.

For instance, at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam on my way to Turkey, I had the chance to talk to a couple that was very uncomfortable with the extra security. I was not in Turkey, yet. However, the Turkish couple, on their way back from their vacation, indicated that being a Turk in Europe, even for a limited time, was very difficult. They complained about the security and argued that Europe is trying to be a fortress that excludes all the nations they hate. For them being a Turk was enough to be seen as a possible refugee or illegal immigrant and this was the main reason why they—or I should say ‘we’—had to go through a second security check-point. This brief story or experience before my flight to Turkey once again reminded me that I should have been ready or alerted for the occurrence of such incidences in random places or in unexpected situations.

Sometimes, I found myself in the awkward situation of taking notes on my phone, or writing down some key words on a piece of paper napkin or a receipt in ‘unexpected’ situations. At the end of each day, I had a bunch of notes all over my bag or electronic devices waiting to be translated into better-organized forms. It was sometimes boring and sometimes overwhelming since it was basically re-living the entire day through my notes. However, crafting regular and detailed field notes on daily basis helped me understand even the very simplest form of conversations that first seemed not ‘interesting,’ and helped me problematize and re-consider what seems to be ‘normal’ in the routine of the daily life (Pader 2006, 166).
During my research or living within the ordinary life, I was “a conduit of research and a primary vehicle of knowledge production” (Shehata 2006, 246). As one of my main principles in my research, I tried to expose as little as possible in the environment except myself. I was often signified as an Other due to my residence in the USA or way of life on some occasions. I myself was the trigger that led people to reveal their images of the other. As Shehata’s (2006) experience of ethnographic study in Egypt indicates, in certain settings, revealing my own identity contributed to the salience of the empirical analysis. They sometimes stayed quiet for the sake of kindness or for not revealing their perceptions as they might have thought it would be offending. However, their gestures, unwillingness, or any sign of ‘unspoken’ or ‘non-reported’ images and emotions were still revealing about the general tone of the conversation. In addition to this, whenever I was asked about my research or studies, people showed great interest. When I told them I used to conduct research, they, sometimes hesitantly, indicated that they might be wrong, as I know better than them for being an ‘expert.’ Yet, most of the time they continued with, great detail, what they think about international relations, or particularly my research topic. If they did not want to talk or had any nothing to day, they usually referred to me people who “would have enjoyed talking about my research.”

It was those moments of “you should talk to my neighbor. He is Kurdish (or Alevi or many other ‘minority’ identities) and lived in Germany for five years” that I mostly reached out people for my semi-structured interviews. The main spatial settings for my un-structured interviews were the same as my ethnographic research. In fact, after the fieldwork, I noticed that I believe that my methods of ethnography and interview had blurry lines. However, my semi-structured interviews were mostly scheduled in advance.
while some of them happened rather randomly. I conducted my interviews in causal settings such as social gatherings, leisure activities, or where people can have a rather friendly and ordinary time. I used snowball sampling to reach my interviewees.

In interpretive researches scholars "intentionally and self-consciously address the oblique, partial sight that characterizes all human observation" (Yanow 2006a, 77). Such practices apparent in interpretive studies include the purposive selection of texts, respondents, and/or observational posts, snowball sampling and so forth (2006a, 77). My sampling did not randomly form a representative group. I started with people I personally knew or were introduced to. Then, I asked people whether they knew anybody who would be interested in my topic and willing to talk about my topic. As a result, I could have interviewed with different age and gender groups, people from diverse profession, people with diverging socio-economic backgrounds, and people with different stories.

In my interviews the questions were not pre-defined. This allowed spontaneity and left room for new questions to develop during my interviews. However, I had certain questions that I tried to ask my interviewees. For instance, I asked almost all of my interviewees whether they travelled abroad or whether they had any strong affiliation with any group/identity. I also asked each of my interviewees to elaborate on their sources of knowledge when they clearly indicated their perceptions about other entities such as the European Union or Israel.

My interviews were ordinary language interview, which is a tool for uncovering the everyday meaning of words (Schaffer 2006, 151). Therefore, when my interlocutors used a common idiom, for instance, I asked them whether we agreed on the meaning or
not. Inspired by Schaffer (2006, 151-152), my guiding principles in conducting ordinary language interviews were: 1) to pay attention to accumulated knowledge or shared culture the words my interviewees used reflect; 2) how or in what contexts certain words are used; and 3) divergence in the use of certain words, images and reference points.

Unstructured ordinary language interviews let me pursue the meanings of specific statements and words, and understand them within the broader narratives related to the overall reactions the individuals give in certain contexts (Soss 2006, 128). For instance, I believed that the “West” as an “Other” was blurry. I wanted to understand the meaning-making of individuals and their ‘language’ concerning the other or the ‘West’ in particular. At the end of interviews, it turned out that ‘the West’ is not really a blurry concept in everyday life. There are certain given meanings of ‘the West’ that most of my interviewees referred to.

As part of my interviews, I used “free association” that was proven useful in Isaacs’ (1958) study on perceptions about Asian people in American minds. I tried to initiate most of my conversations with questions such “when I say the “West” what comes to your mind first?” In response to their answers, I asked what they based this definition or idea on

I also used various concepts and ideas to lead my interviews. One of the principal catalyzers I used was the case of “Burn a Quran Day.” In addition to “Burn a Quran Day,” I learned during my early interviews that “Cartoon Crisis” that took place in Denmark in 2006 was more popular among Turkish people. It was a better catalyzer to lead people to elaborate more about their emotions or feelings about the Other. They knew the events in Europe better than they knew the ones in America.
My systematic, yet flexible, interpretive research is the main component of this study. However, as I indicated previously, this dissertation is a chorographic script. It is a mystery. Therefore, in various parts, I inevitably included experiences or personal knowledge that did not fit the time frame of my fieldwork. Moreover, it is my meaning-making of others’ meaning making through a framework of analysis I created before the fieldwork. Hence, I believe it is essential to summarize what my systematizing or disciplining conceptual analysis was.

My study relies on the following concepts: 1) Self and Other; 2) Othering; 3) Representation of the Other and System of Representation; 4) the East and the West; 5) ordinary; and 6) Turkishness. Each of these concepts might require a separate and more detailed discussion. However, I do not want to overwhelm the reader with conceptual discussions once more as I already did so in the literature review section. Instead, I briefly give the main assumptions about each concept.

The self basically means a set of identities an individual, entity, a society or a larger-scale community relate or being related to. The self and the other form a constitutive binary relationship that a self can be a belonging that we choose, socialize into, or made to choose or fit. It can also be the identity or the set of identities that an Other does not belong to. The Other is a reference point or component of the definition of the self. It is the some or totality of traits that does not belong to the self.

Othering is to articulate an individual or an entity as not belonging to the self. It is the formulation and maintenance of ideas that emphasize demarcations and acting accordingly. Othering usually involves emphasis on negative differences and portrays
the different as inferior. It can also contain positive differences assigned to the one that
does not belong to the self.

Representation of the Other and System of Representation, as discussed in
detail in the literature review, is the production of what or who an other is through
language. However, it should be regarded as more than language and as a particular
instance of discourse. That is, representation of the Other is the production of who and
what the Other is via speech, text and other human artifacts. Most important,
representation of the Other generally is an “institutionalized system of knowledge.” It
means that same discourse; characteristics of the way of thinking might appear across
range of texts and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within
society. An institutionalized system of representation, hence, travels across space and
time.

The East and the West first of all stands for blurry geographical zones that are
context specific. Besides the basic geographical meaning, the division forms a specific
instance of self-other relationship. As discussed in Orientalism and Occidentalism
literature, the East, from the perspective of its Other, stands for mostly the Middle East
and some Asian communities. It usually denotes traditionalism and religions such as
Islam. It usually covers issues such as lack of democracy, underdevelopment, lack of
human/women rights and similar negative connotations. From a self point of view, it
usually means the victim of colonialism, the morally superior and similar positive
endorsements. Similarly, in the eyes of its Other the West can be the land of capitalism,
exploitation within and outside itself, and moral deviance or it can be the land of
science, development, freedom, and democracy.
Ordinary means the individuals that do not hold key positions in a society. Those key positions can range from policy decision makers to state leaders or a public figure that reaches masses through different channels such as books or articles. Ordinary also stands for the situation an individual is in. It is briefly the daily life practices or cases that are different from occasions such as parliamentary meetings or academic conferences. For instance, a faculty member in a leading university can be regarded as a key or non-ordinary actor if he is invited for a speech. However, I consider him as ordinary when he is in his golf club making jokes about a situation that involves othering.

A Turk is defined as being a citizen of Turkish Republic. However, because of the complex social and ethnic diversity in Turkey, several groups prefer to identify as not Turkish. However, without talking or asking to the individuals you cannot decide whether they identify as so or not. For practical reasons, a Turk can be either an individual born/socialized in the Turkish society. In addition to this, the ability to speak Turkish as native language can also be regarded as one of the most important denominators.

The summary section of my literature review is indicative of the basic assumption I have found myself in the process of co-generation in the field. In addition to those essential presumptions, I have designed my own categorization of othering or a framework to systematically go through the information I gathered in the field.

As Neumann (1996, 154) reminds us, for Todorov, othering or the ‘the problematic of alterity’ could be located along three axes: “First of all, there is a value judgment (an axiological level): the other is good or bad. … Secondly, there is the action of rapprochement, of distancing in relation to the other (a praxeological level): I embrace the other’s values, I identify myself with him; or else I identify the other with myself, I
impose my own image upon him; between submission to the other, there is also a third term, which neutrality, or indifference. Thirdly, I know or am ignorant of the other’s identity (this would be the epistemic level)” ([1982] 1999, 185).

Drawing on the three axes Todorov suggested, I have designed a three-tier classification of othering. First, agreeing that people construct with reference to archetypical images (Eliade 1959), I classify othering in accordance with the sources of knowledge/reference point people use. The first reference point is religion. If a person refers to any religious source in assigning meaning to her other, I classify or categorize it “Ecclesiastic-type,” “Ecclesiastic-Othering.” If any belief system, not necessarily monotheistic religions, is referred in response to my question: “What makes you think that or what do you base this on?” it will denote the presence of ecclesiastic-image. For instance, Muslim individuals usually refer to religious literature or teachings of the prophet as main source of their knowledge. This, I expected, would be common during my field research. Second, the source people might refer to be other individuals they socialize with or are taught about. To make it concrete, for instance, people can refer to ‘authorities’ such as academics, public figures, ancestors, politicians, scholars, journalists, or key family members that they show high trust in, yet with no clear source that I can check later. They can tell that their family taught them not to trust a neighbor of a certain ethnicity or not to conduct commerce with the members of a certain religion. Such an othering that is based on individuals that people rely on will form “Social-type” or “Social-Othering.” Third, people can refer to their formal education. The circular in different phases of their formal education can be their source of knowledge in othering. This forms the third type of othering that I categorize as “Education-Based-Othering.”
Fourth, people can cite clearly designated sources such as scholarly articles, books, documentaries or sources that are reached out as their personal interest or effort. I will categorize such othering that is based on individually reached and clearly cited sources as “Learned-Othering.” Finally, sometimes people can refer to blurry sources. In several cases, they can respond: “I heard so” or “I read or watched it somewhere, but I'm not sure when or where.” I categorize this type othering with reference to the source it relies on as “Fuzzy-Othering.”

These five categories: “Ecclesiastic Othering,” “Social Othering,” “Education Based-Othering,” “Learned Othering,” and “Fuzzy Othering” form one of the frameworks that shape my analysis of co-generated data. In addition to this reference point-based categorization of othering, I also categorize othering in relation to the qualities I believe they contain. As discussed in the literature review, othering usually contains humiliation, de-humanization and various other negative qualifiers assigned to the Other. However, othering does not necessarily have to be always negative. Othering can contain images that portray the different aspects of the Other as superior/positively, as well. In addition to this negative-positive dichotomy, people can just refer to differences as mere differences without any clear qualifiers. Therefore, I will categorize images or othering with three clusters: “Negative,” “Positive,” and “Neutral.”

In addition to my categorization based on the qualifiers and reference points, I cluster images or othering with respect to the level of threat. By level of threat, I mean, the extent of threat people report to see against their self from an Other they define. I describe the following categories. 1) “Hostile Othering” referring to representation of the other that predominantly contains enemy images that sees the other as a threat to the
self through various means such as cultural assimilation or armed conflict; 2) “Amicable Othering” that means representation that contains clear demarcations defining rigid boundaries with a self and a other yet no obvious perception of enmity; 3) “Accommodationist Othering,” last but not least important, borrowing Oren's (2003, 15) “accommodationist perspective” enemy image, I define this third category of othering that contains both friendship and enmity at the same time.

Finally, in analyzing the co-generated knowledge or in my process of meaning making of other people’s meaning-making, I consider each instance of othering in relation to other individual processes. I regard them as rooted in a general structure or institutionalized system of representation. The purpose of such a framework of analysis is to pay attention to possible trends of representations among ordinary Turks and to try to understand the system of representation encompassing each individual case.

These main clusters of othering or representation, first according to the reference points and second according to the qualifiers, will form one of the cores of my analysis. It is important that these clusters are not mutually exclusive and they are not or should not be considered as a final categorization as they are experience-distant frameworks. As apparent in the following chapters, these categorizations often worked as efficient or as ordering frameworks while sometimes they became quite irrelevant for individual cases because representation of the other or other appeared to be partial. That is, one single entity or an individual is sometimes thought be enemy across certain issues and sometimes friend or semi-self across other issues.

The bulk of this dissertation is a mystery or chorographic script I authored in accordance with the co-generated information during my fieldwork, numerous everyday
experiences, and under the disciplining influence of the literature and my framework of
analysis I summarized above. The following chapters are organized according to the
general trends I considered to be apparent among individuals I had the chance to spend
time with during either their daily lives or unstructured interviews. It is a personal
account that helped me reconsider my *self* and deal with my own wounds.
CHAPTER 3
IS A TURK’S ONLY FRIEND ANOTHER TURK?

Paranoid Turk: A Pleonasm

In the aftermath of the ‘Gezi Protests’ and the climax of the most recent corruption crises in Turkey, Goldman—an economist, the Spengler columnist for Asia Times Online, and an associate fellow at the Middle East Forum—depicted Turkish politics as an instance of paranoid mindset in the Middle East Forum. He suggested that “Paranoia is endemic in Turkish Politics because so much of it is founded on conspiracy” and “the expression ‘paranoid Turk’ is a pleonasm” (2014, 1). I read Goldman’s article after a colleague of mine had mentioned it on our way to lunch.

On a beautiful Florida day in winter 2014, I left my apartment to meet a colleague for lunch at a little Mexican restaurant close to the campus. The week before, when I received the lunch invitation, I enthusiastically replied and accepted to meet. I could not have missed that chance to get out of my apartment and have a little bit of normal life ‘far away’ from my desk. Before leaving my apartment for lunch, I checked my e-mails and replied to a few of them. I tried to abstain from clicking any of my files with names related to any of my research projects. Still, I could not help myself clicking the list of the books to be checked out from the library. I wrote down a few of the call numbers and left my apartment.

I took the bus and encountered a neighbor who once explained why “locals of our college town chose to sit at the back of the bus.” For him, their choices of seats were quite clear. “The locals sit where they can isolate themselves from the college kids and international students while they commuted to their jobs, most likely, at the food court in the mall” or “service facilities on the campus,” he articulated. Then, he complained that
Chinese students did not respect personal space on the bus because they did not have any perception of private space. “Yet,” he conceded, “we have to get used to it as Chinese signs are now everywhere as the third mostly-spoken language in town.” He was always an Other compared to the locals—I hate to write it but in his words: “the black or redneck”—of the town who chose to isolate themselves from the international students. Yet, he was always in solidarity with the broader community of “white, better-off Americans” who is supposed to get used to the increasing Chinese population or decreasing “respect for personal space on public buses.” Personal space on a public bus? During our brief bus-ride, he re-demonstrated “the data” that he believed I should have included in my dissertation. And I once again protested. Othering was in the air. It has been always with me since I ‘chose’ to study it.

After getting off the bus, I met my colleague. We had to detour to the restaurant so that he could run an errand. During our walk he remarked, “I have just read an article. You might want to use it in your research. It is from the *Middle East Forum*.” My friend, who is originally from Turkey, mentioned Goldman’s article. Yet, for him, the author’s religion was more important than the content of the article. Goldman’s affiliations were not a secret. The author himself reflects on his identities in the article. He describes his in-groups and highlights that he is not related to any groups the Turkish politicians accuse of setting and triggering plots for impeding the positive progress in Turkey.

The brief conversation about Goldman’s article was confusing. My silence made it an almost monologue. I was hesitant to comment on the article because Goldman, according to my colleague’s summary, was pointing out a trend I struggled to
comprehend; a trend I was planning to completely disregard. I encountered various images, perceptions, or representations of the Other that Goldman and many others would categorize as paranoia. Therefore, I thought, I was partially in agreement with the author. I stated that Goldman and I had similar observations. I kept my agreement inarticulate because my colleague believed that Goldman had ulterior motives in “operating” the “the idea of paranoid Turk.” He expressed, “We all know. When I search him on Google, I was not surprised. I am a Turk and when someone writes about our Prime Minister …” He stopped and stressed, “whom I do not agree with,” and continued, “if somebody talks about us, I, for sure, question who this guy is. Where is he from? What does he do? You know we do not have any problems with our Jewish citizens. But this guy, his attack, harsh critique, unwarranted judgments, repeated emphasis on paranoid Turk cannot be without a reason.”

I did not know the content of the article in detail. Goldman probably wrote about the reaction my colleague gave, I thought. However, the tone of my colleague’s reaction gave me the hint that he found the article offensive. I did not want to ruin our lunch. I wanted a brief break, not research or any form of politics. Nonetheless, I was already occupied with the notion of paranoia. I briefly ended our conversation by indicating that the article sounded interesting, yet, it should have been read cautiously—in order not to increase my colleague’s unease. I was fair: fair and respectful to him and fair to my enthusiasm. Or, perhaps, I was ‘politically correct.’

During my fieldwork, I really did not appreciate or value the trend that is popularly coined as “paranoia.” I was hoping that it would cease recurring. The images were, nevertheless, conspiracies or conspiracy theories that are commonly referred as a
social and political epidemic in Turkey. My first impression was that there was nothing ‘new’ that I could write about. However, these particular images persisted—adding to my frustration and losing the hope with the originality of my work. However, later, I noticed that those images were the reality that so many people live within. They were outcomes of social and personal knowledge, experience, belief, and emotions. Those images were “what the people believed to be the truth” (Boulding 1956, 5-6). They were their justified subjective realities. They were the alternatives most of my interlocutors chose as their source of action.

Representation of the Other that so many call “paranoia” is not unique to Turkish Politics (Pipes 1997, 1996, Robins and Post 1997). However, beyond the cross-country presence of this trend of Othering, for me, it was more important that it was not only the ‘high public figures’ that imagined or represented the other with a so-called “paranoid-mindset.” The daily life of ordinary Turks that I had the chance to converse or socialize with was full of comparable representations, too.

While I was working on these pages, the PEW Research Center released the results of its most recent Global Attitudes Survey whose country studies include Turkey. The survey results partially answer my question “Do Turkish People really mean that all but the Turks are actually foes of the Turks?” or “Do Turks like any other nation other than Turks?” According to the PEW survey, Turks do not like any nation but the Turks. Relying on the survey, Poushter indicates that “it is hard to find any country or organization the Turkish people really like, except, of course, Turkey itself” (2014). Surprised? I was not. I was ‘pleased.’ My contentment was not because of the fact that the Turkish people disliked almost any nation or international organization. I was happy
because the PEW results summarized some parts of my at-home-ethnography in the language of descriptive statistics.

Israel is the most disliked state followed by the U.S.A and Russia, the PEW concludes. The Turkish people also disliked Saudi Arabia, EU, China, Brazil, Iran, and NATO. Similarly poor views, Poushter (2014) summarized, were reported for extremists like Hamas and Hezbollah, and violence against civilians such as suicide bombing. In his brief report, Poushter excludes only Taliban, Pakistan and France, towards which the Turkish people report unfavorable attitudes, as well (PEW 2013).

Turks do not report favorable attitudes toward anybody but only their ‘self.’ This notable result from the PEW Survey points out the presence of the images that were predominant during my fieldwork. Yet, this is only one component of the broader and complex picture I came across in the fieldwork. The situation is definitely not a black and white case or as homogenous as the results of the PEW conclude. For example, as I discuss later, Turks also dislike some of their ‘selves,’ as well. Also, such survey results or explanations of the representation of the Other through the premises of “paranoid mindset” create the idea that a given percentage of a populace hold ‘only’ negative images. In addition to this oversimplification, similar surveys and categorization of images of the Other as mere outcomes of a paranoid and abnormal personality—or reasoning—place the focus on the images themselves instead of the process of representation of the Other that forms them. In a sense, surveys and approaches using paranoid mindset as their explanatory factor give us a snapshot of a bigger picture. They neglect the whole of the painting or alienate it from the artist.
Unlike methods such as surveys, my study helped me familiarize with the structure and the agent reporting negative images about the other international actors or other states. I believe this *mystery* sheds light on the dynamics of the representation of the Other, rather than simply reporting what kind of images are/were prevalent among the ordinary Turks. In doing so, it contributes to our understanding of the complex nod of different aspects of representation of the Other and the bigger picture these so-called paranoid images or ‘only-negative’ images are placed within.

In this chapter, I suggest that what is portrayed as paranoid perception is in fact a form of representation of the Other that is not only peculiar to key actors in the country. It is not an “extra-societal phenomenon” that should be considered as “disruptive, illegitimate, irrational and anti-social” (*Slayden and Whillock 1995, ix-x*). It is how people imagine, build and sustain their own reality, and behave accordingly. My research suggests that what is discussed as paranoia is not similar to a psychological disorder that needs to be cured through extra-ordinary measures. It is not a pathological circumstance. Instead, it is a complex practice of representation of the Other—through negative and positive images, not only ‘unfavorable’ attitudes—that incorporates various systems of knowledge, individual experiences, subjective truths, reference points, and emotions.

**One, Two, Three … Long Live Turks**

A Turkish proverb, “Turks have no friends other than Turks,” is probably one of the most practical phrases or opinions that so many Turks would decisively use in explaining an inter-state or inter-community relation in which they feel betrayed or treated unfairly. When I was in elementary school, I was taught to internalize this ‘fact.’
So proudly, along with friends, I sang songs or read poems reminding this uniqueness or loneliness of the Turkish nation.

The official discourse teaching the Turks to be cautious against the others has taken different forms in ordinary life. An example of how the lack of reliance to other nations is a part of daily life is a 'simple,' yet remarkable, kid’s song. One morning when the news on the “Turkish political paranoia” was popular once again, I read Shafak—an acclaimed Turkish author—in *The New York Times*. She shared exactly the same song I sang as a child—with slight changes in the adjectives—well, insults—we used. She (2014) wrote:

“One, two, three … long live Turks … four, five, six, Poland plummeted … seven, eight, nine, Russians are traitors …” We children merrily sang this song on the streets, declaring that Italians were cunning, the Germans pig. We grew up believing that Turkey was surrounded on three sides by water and on four sides by enemies. The Greeks aspired to conquer Istanbul and make it Constantinopolis. The Arabs were untrustworthy. The Russians plotted to seize Bosporus. Everybody wanted a piece of Anatolia, our land, and Turk’s only friend was another Turk.

Turks should not trust anybody; that is what we learned. It is common, for instance, to hear that “The European Union! Why do we even bother? It is a Christian club and we are Muslim.” It is a simple, conclusive, cautious, exclusionary, and perhaps the most preeminent premise or mental shortcut among the Turks: Turkey was born alone; against all the powers that invaded Anatolia and the minorities who cooperated with them.

For many, even the prevalent use of such a phrase might be a strong marker of paranoia. It might also explain the percentage of the population who reported very unfavorable opinion of this or that nation in surveys. However, to what extent do Turkish
people really mean that all but the Turks are actually foes? Do they justify it? If so, how? Is the situation really as ‘black and white’ as the term “paranoid Turk,” the statement “Turk’s only friend is another Turk,” or surveys like World Values survey indicate? The situation is not simple enough to be dismissed as paranoia or it is not really possible to create mutually exclusive cases of favorable versus disapproving opinion about the Other.

When I asked people whether they perceived any threat to their ‘self’ almost all of them replied with a direct no. For many, there was no clear external threat they could name right away. This nearly unanimous agreement on the absence of an external threat is interesting and puzzling for two reasons. First, contrary to the “paranoid Turk” idea, none of them were really skeptical of any ‘other’ when they were simply asked about threats. Second, although their initial responses were “I don’t think there is any threat to us,” they were ambiguously cynical of, threatened, and disturbed by the outsiders once they were asked to comment further on the other societies or world politics. When we talked about, for instance, “Burn a Quran Day,” the “Cartoon Crisis,” or a particular state, almost all of them described other nations as threats, which they initially did not consider so. Their elaboration included emotions fears, concerns, diverse reference points, (in)experiences, hatred, and admiration.

During our conversations I asked my interlocutors to free-associate some words. I asked them what comes to their mind when I said “America” (in Turkish it is commonly used for the USA), “Israel,” “the Middle East,” “the East,” “the West,” “the Other,” “the European Union,” and some other key words. After their initial responses, I asked if they could elaborate further. The answers were fascinating. They mostly negated their initial
perception of lack of external threats and described mixed opinions with a higher frequency of negative images. Although shadowed by the preeminence of the negative images, some positive and neutral images/perceptions emerged during free associations.

“America” sparked various negative images: “hegemon,” “turmoil in weak states,” “the greatest fitna,” “exploitation,” “cruelty,” “imperialism,” “pawn (of Israel and the Jewish lobby),” “hypocrisy,” “prodigality,” “selfish,” “morally corrupt,” “Hiroshima,” “exploiting Turkey,” “sneaky,” “hawkish,” and “the major obstacle to world peace.” In addition to these, a few positive images were indicated: “freedom,” “human rights,” “sports,” and “science.” However, compared to the frequency of the negative images, these images appeared rather marginally. Finally, several neutral words were reported, some of which were later used in negative contexts: “Bush,” “Obama,” “oil,” “the great power,” “money,” and “the (world) leader.”

During one of my interviews in June 8, 2013 the negative images of the USA was accompanied by what is popularly called paranoid thinking. My interviewee, Ali, was a 22-year-old male college student. I met him at an invitation of a common friend of ours. When we met, he told me that he was interested in politics, the future of Islam, and, “the real underlying dynamics of international relations.” I, being a graduate student in IR, sparked his interest in discussing politics with an “expert,” he complemented. On that night, as ‘the expert’ interested in the representation of the other, I tried to direct our talk to my topic. I needed to collect as much information as I could during my stay in Turkey.

I was on sort of a mission to make him reveal his perception of the Other. I wanted him to give me, at least, the hints of what he thought about other nations,
groups, or about his ‘self.’ I felt sneaky. As an undercover spy seeking the secret or the hidden, I struggled. Then, I felt like an apprentice. In order to get his attention, I mentioned that one of my main premises in explaining international relations was that the self-other nexus is at the core of everything. Everything? I lied. In fact, I exaggerated the importance of the othering with the hope that he would talk about it more without questioning my reasoning or expertise. He did not doubt my premise. He did not talk about my topic, either. He, indeed, did not care.

My expertise was not enough to take his attention. Or, there were so many distractions around, I optimistically thought. What else could it be? What else could have explained his lack of interest in the topic for which I had so many sleepless nights? It was a failure. I felt embarrassed. I asked him if he could spare some time, perhaps a lunch, to talk about world politics. He agreed to meet on his campus. He even promised to invite his friends who might have contributed to my dissertation.

On the day we met on his campus, none of his friends were willing to join us. Nonetheless, I ‘secured’ at least one conversation for the day: an interviewee who was more willing to talk this time. An interviewee who checked whether I had questions that he might have clarified for me. I was the expert. I was the one with degrees in IR. I thought my knowledge was supposed to give me the power. I was the one who was supposed to clarify international relations, not him. I felt my authority was overthrown. Knowledge did not bring power. The ‘quality’ or the ‘nationality’ of my knowledge turned me into the one who needs to be enlightened or freed. I was told that I was enslaved to the American way of thinking.
When I met Ali on his campus, he first asked if I still had a headache. Luckily, I was feeling better and I was glad that the conversation started in a casual tone. After getting tea and sandwiches, we found a shady spot on that hot Istanbul day.

Unwrapping my sandwich, I asked if he stayed longer in our friend’s social. He pulled a wry face and complained, “I had to leave. After you [left], a bunch of fella came and they were not the type [of people] I like to be around.” I probed, “What do you mean? Were they disturbing?” He replied, “… more than disturbing. They were … blotto. I do not have any problem with those who drink ‘properly’ and cause no trouble. But when I sense someone drinks a lot, like those who were just a bunch of redundant folks, you know, what type of fella I am talking about. When they show up, I’d rather leave. I myself, as a devout Muslim, do not drink and do not respect these guys at all.” I asked hurriedly, “You said you are a devout Muslim. Is it your major identity or one of the most important ones?” Ali, without hesitation, answered, “Above anything else, I am, Alhamdulillah, a Muslim. Then, I am a Turk. Then, I am an engineering student. And it goes on. But I always consider myself a Muslim, first.” I thought that he must have sensed my social scientists worries of reaching out some sort of information that I could have ‘identify him’ by and he directly ranked his identities. Then he added, “Do you know what I mean. I first and foremost call myself a Muslim. I am a good Muslim …” I could not stop repeating silently “So humble!” and felt the guilt of judging him already.

Then, I tried to stay focused on what he was saying, “(…) I believe everyone should be so [a good Muslim]. But it’s their choice. They follow Allah’s path or not. All I can do is to teach them the religion. I can’t force anybody. Those drunken guys. I can’t force them … I can’t kick them out either; it was not my flat. I could only leave and I did so.”
thought he was a very respectful person for other people’s way of life. He was also aware of his personal space and preferences. Instead of intervening in other’s life, he chose to leave the social because it was disturbing him.

After talking about the social a little bit more, his studies became our subject. He asked me how life was in America. He was interested in the university I was studying and wondered about the education system. It was the right moment to switch the conversation to the structure I arranged in my fieldwork plan.

“Well,” I took a breath with the relief of directing the conversation to my purpose, “You said you have never been to America and you are quite enthusiastic to study there. Hopefully, after you graduate … we can continue our chat there if you start before I finish my program.” I really did not hope for that because it would have meant postponing my own graduation. And I continued, “But I want to ask you something before I answer your question. It is so simple. Nothing complicated. I wonder what comes to your mind when I say America?” He smiled and paused for a moment. I did not know what the smile was for but he looked as if he was going to deliver a serious speech other than just telling me the words or images he associated with ‘America.’ I was right.

After a very brief silence, Ali expressed what he associated ‘America’ with: “First, science comes [to my mind]. We all want to get a degree in America.” He referred to the job market in Turkey and added that if someone had any history of US education, they started the race ahead of his competitors. He said, “There is nothing wrong to admire their science. We all know America as the epicenter of science and education. Like the Ottoman Empire. As our prophet Sal allahu alayhi wa salaam (Peace and blessing of
Allah upon him) once advised us, we should learn science wherever we come across it. Now some people; some people that I am not very close but meet occasionally to chat about religion and read Quran, remind me all the time that we should be very alert in approaching the life in America. They say, overall it’s dar-al Harb. You know what it means, right?” I nodded and added, “Yes. I know the division of land of Islam and land of war, but don’t you think it is a bit or a lot or outdated?” He suddenly became defensive, “Don’t get me wrong. I do not agree with the division, at least for the war or killing them just because they are not Muslim. I said some people remind me that division. I did not say I agreed… Anyhow. In fact, they still have a valid point. We should be careful. If I go to America, I will go for their science; nothing else.” I proceeded, “it is science that comes to your mind first, then?” He replied, “Yes, first science, but not only that. (…) What distinguishes us from America is our religion. Our belonging is to Allah. And unlike Christianity and Judaism, our religion is not only spiritual. It also regulates social, political, economic, and other realms of our life. This is what makes us unique. So, America! I also think about a pawn, a toy that is manipulated by Israel and the Jewish lobby. It is a society that has to consume for the sake of moneymakers. And here comes the threat, I believe. America is what we just see. It is like machinery …” He joked, “America is a machine. I am an engineering student. Let me use my expertise” and laughed, “it is a machine that Israel holds the codes for. However, they program the machine, it’ll function that way.” I was confused. I asked if he could explain more, “I’m sorry but I am lost. Islam is a different religion. And Judaism, or the Jewish lobby runs America. Is there any connection? Or are you talking about two different things?” He apologized for my confusion and clarified. “We are just different. At least, I should say
that is what we should implement in our life. We should let Islam regulate the social, political, and economic … We have so many principles in Islam that would bring social justice, for instance. We are told to help our neighbors, not to get rich at their expense. You know. They are simple, yet precious principles. So my point was; I would rather just learn science in America; not to live a life [designed] for millionaires’ profits or Jewish interests.” That is what I was exactly taught when I was child: Help the neighbor. Yet, I was never warned against an economic system that was designed for millionaires’ profit or the interest of the Jewish lobby. Instead, I was given a hierarchy of whom to help.

After Ali’s emphasis on how selective he would be in the USA, I was supposed to tell about the education system in America. Yet, my craving for more information got the control again. Instead of telling about my life, I mentioned the attempt of “Burn a Quran day” in our college town. I asked if he had heard of it. He did not know the protest attempts. He murmured—as if he was shy or embarrassed of not knowing it—that he could recall a couple of newspapers covering the event. However, he could not remember any details. Not to injure his confidence, I intervened, “It is not really important. I must have paid more attention than anyone else because it occurred in my city.” My city? It suddenly felt awkward and I ‘fixed’ it: “I mean my city, where I live now. I am from Kayseri. You remember? I must have mentioned it last night.” He nodded, “Yeah. I know. You are from Florida, too. You lived there long enough to call it your home.” And he asked, “Tell me what do you think about it? How did you feel?” I was not expecting it at all. I should say: I was not hoping for that question because I did not want to share how I felt about it. And I did not share it with Ali. I did not want to be judged or named as the “servant of the West,” or the “betrayer.” Yet, let me share it here.
As a matter of fact, I really did not see the protest attempt as an insult or attack to my personal believes or identities. I did not get nervous or angry. A few friends of mine sent me e-mails from New York. They apologized on behalf of the American people and the particular congregation. They wished us—the students having a Muslim background or identity—safety and that the anger of the particular church did not affect our lives. Seemingly, there was nothing threatening against “us” in Gainesville. What made me feel guilty upon receiving those e-mails was that I was more nervous about any retaliation or (violent) counter-protests from Islamist groups. I recall that around the proposed day of burning a Quran, there was a football game. During football games, our college town is more crowded than a normal day and I used to live close to the football stadium. I was worried that there could be a radical counter-protest “in the name of my identity.” I was, prejudicially, nervous. Contrary to what was expected from me, I was more anxious because of a probable violent response that would physically hurt or kill me. This was the root of my unwillingness to share what I felt about the Burn a Quran Day. I just told Ali that I did not think the protest was an important event, but I was just curious whether he knew it or not. Perhaps, I should have told him ‘the details’ or the reality. It might have initiated a different form of dialogue. But I was not comfortable. I prioritized my feelings or comfort over my research.

Following my brief and halfhearted comment on the protest attempt, Ali told me, “You know what. We should not give a fuck to them. Excuse me! God has his hell for them.” He said something in Arabic that I could not comprehend. Then, he translated it for me, “Long live Hell for those who are cruel. It is an Arabic proverb.” I was thinking, “Arabic? Pre-Islamic or Islamic?” It did not matter for him. Nor did it for me at that
moment. He apologized once again, “I’m sorry for swearing. Yet, it summarizes how I feel about such acts. Burning or even thinking about burning Quran is certainly disrespecting Islam. Fuck them. They are insulting all the Muslims on purpose. For their purpose. I hope they all burn in Allah’s hell.” Ali, the person I have found very respectful for other ways of life or the person that opposed the idea of fighting against the dar-al-Harb, suddenly started to praise the fire of the hell for those who thought about burning Quran. I did not intervene this time. I kept listening.

“What do you expect from the ignorant. Their human rights, freedom, religious tolerance, respect (…) everything is hypocrisy. (…) Anything about human rights is only for themselves,” Ali continued. He was angrier or more serious than he had been at the beginning. Shaking his head, he said, “They don’t care about the rest. It is still not the reason why we should be careful. (…) The threat is the way they want to exploit us. They want Islam to stay passive, not implemented as a rule; a rule governing our lives not only our prayers. They are scared because they will lose profit.” I interrupted and asked, “Do you think it is capitalism? That, what I think you imply, is the main driving force of America; and it is a threat for the Islamic world. I said capitalism because you are talking about profit and exploitation. Capitalism is what you reminded me.”

Upon my intervention, he straightened and replied with an authoritative tone, “It is not only America. It is the Western States. You know. Europe, Israel, and America. Maybe you’ll think, when you write your dissertation, that it is an embellishment, but they are all liars.” It seemed like he was not interested in answering my question but wanted to emphasize his point of view over and over; “They are all liars (…) They are cruel. It is not what I have just made up. It is what they create for themselves. That’s the
image they show to the world. Cruelty, torture, exploitation is all over the world. Who founded this injustice? The West. It is them who use the democracy idol whenever they want, and it is them who demolish exactly the same idol for their own interest. Those who fill the squares when a whale strands, a few animals die or it is dog or cat day, (...) are quiet for people dying in Palestine. Quiet for over a hundred and two thousand lost lives in Syria in only three years. For six thousand people killed in Egypt in only three months. Who does this? The West. I am sure, among them, there are people who have conscience and who are hearted. We always welcome these people. However, the rest, the majority of them make us think like this. The principles of Machiavelli, whom I am sure you know, is what the West is and what the West do in their foreign policy.

However, I am not hopeless at all. One day the world will become a rose garden. Right now the Islamic world doesn’t not have a head. We do not have a center to turn to. But love for Allah where we unite. Still, we need a leader who would stop all the divisions in the Islamic world. Then, we will live in a rose garden.”

We went on talking about his unrest of how Muslims are portrayed in the US media. He suggested me several books that I had never had the chance to purchase during my stay in Turkey. He told that I could agree with him to the whole extent if I had a chance to read those books. For him, I was very likely to be prejudiced against Islam. He thought so because I was receiving education in Political Science in America. He did not agree that education in Political Science and Engineering would be similar. He argued that Political Science was all about winning in politics and I was being taught to conduct politics in the American style. He added that whether I was conscious or not, I study and do research in Political Science for the sake of America. For him, I thought
like Americans. Before he left, he had advised me, like many others did, to get out of the “American box I was locked in.” Perhaps, he had a point. I might have been prejudiced. I even did not care to write down the titles or authors of the books he suggested.

Ali’s images transcended our meeting. Numerous individuals reported similar, if not identical, images. They were incredulous. They were critical of the “real intentions of the West.” They did not believe that the USA, Europe, and Israel were moral towards humanity; they were moral for themselves only. They did not portray the West as the guardian of democracy. For many, the West, including Israel, “uses”—most of them used the West as a singular subject—democracy as a disguise in their relations with others. It has been selectively applied. At home, democracy was a principle, the best form of government, and a guarantee of human rights; abroad, it was a form of excuse, a false hope given to the underdeveloped world and the Islamic world for exploiting their wealth—Middle Eastern oil, Turkish mines, young populations—and to obstruct their potential to become major powers in international relations.

I believe none of their accounts were illegitimate or irrational. Nor were they all trapped in Sèvres syndrome, which I discuss later. The Ottoman history was referred often. Specific historical episodes were used to make more grounded arguments or to justify their validity. Yet, they were not the only reference points. Their justifications were not locked in time. Today, the day they live in, were full of justifications for their arguments. Western literature, or ‘real’ and current political episodes were discussed. Although they did not use any ‘technical’ terms such as method of agreement or path dependency, their reasoning reminded me of what we, the professionals, do. As we have our theoretical assumptions or value-laden judgments, ordinary people of the daily
life also interpret, judge, conclude about politics or international relations in line with their own assumptions, values, and certainly emotions. Did I find every personal account or story sound and convincing? Not exactly! I thought some of them were trivial. Some of them were beyond my imagination. I could falsify some of them. Sometimes, my knowledge that I have been ‘accumulating’ in all these was not enough to convince people who repeatedly told me: “In fact, the dynamics of world politics are different from what you believe.” I ‘believed’ my knowledge of IR was more than a ‘belief,’ more scientific more ‘rational.’ Sometimes, my American education was enough for them to dismiss my words as “sided” or “not neutral.” They were words of a blindfolded graduate student—definitely not of an objective scientist. Most of them refused to understand me. Perhaps, this is where we differed. Understanding was my mission. I tried to comprehend. I tried to make sense of their meaning-making. And I finally concluded, not all of the images were paranoid. ‘Paranoid Turk’ is not a pleonasm. The images of the Other or the West were not mere deviations from ‘the normal.’ They were products of a complex and ‘normal’ process of representation of the Other that individuals inherit, keep alive, and modify.

The images were originated from diverse sources, emotions, experiences, educations, and personal traits. It was hard to understand not the images themselves but the processes leading to those images as outcomes. As I mentioned, some images or perceptions were not convincing. Yet, most of them were instances of representation of the Other that definitely deserved further inquiry rather than dismissal as paranoid thinking. I recognized that during my deskwork, not during the fieldwork, unfortunately.
In May 30, 2013, I left my parents’ to meet my father. I got my headphones and a book to read just in case I took the tram. Despite my ‘mission’ of socializing or involving in the daily life as much as I could for the dissertation, on that day, I was not really keen on my at-home-ethnography. Trying to decide how to distribute my checking account between bills to be paid back home in Florida, fees to be paid for renewing my passport in an other home, and many other expenses, I opted for walking to the state-sponsored social club for teachers where my father was going to be after the zuhr prayer. My entire plan for that day was to get a couple of documents from my father and go to the local police office to renew my passport. I had no scheduled interviews. I was not in the mood for any, either.

I was at the social club early. I did not want to go inside as I might have come across people I knew. I did not want to talk to anybody. I did not wait too long for my father, fortunately. He entered the patio of the social club where tens of teachers and retired professors—all male—were chatting, smoking, and drinking tea. My father was not alone. Two of his friends were with him. I walked in the yard and greeted them. Hastily, I asked my father for the documents. I had to explain his friends, whom my father met at a nearby mosque, the purpose of the documents and implied that I was in a hurry to go to the police office where I was expecting a long queue and unfriendly staff. My father and his friends told me that it was right after the lunch break, which meant longer lines, and they invited me to have tea with them—it was more of a dictation, not an invitation, of the elderly whom to refuse would have been disrespectful. I thought it was going to be boring. If I could, I would have opted for reading a book or editing an essay. As a ‘courtesy,’ I accepted their offer and we sat around a table.
My father, a retired high school teacher of religion (read Islam), re-introduced me to his friends: “Ibrahim Bey (a Turkish suffix that would be equivalent of Mister) teaches Arabic at the university [One of the universities in Kayseri]. We were brought up in neighboring villages. Mehmet Bey, he and I used to teach at the same school. He is a hafiz [a person who knows Quran by heart]. He won the best Quran orator award. Right, Mehmet Bey?” Mehmet Bey nodded in agreement with my father and added “four times”. My father continued, “Unfortunately,” pointing out Mehmet Bey’s cigarette, “he will not be able to win the contest if he continues to smoke.” We all smiled. Then, my father introduced me as his son “studying Political Science in America, Florida and who is a little bit behind his schedule of getting his PhD.” Usual prayers and wishes, and advices followed: “Insha’Allah (Allah willing), you finish it easily and come to your own country to teach. You have gone to America long enough. Come to Turkey and settle down here. When are you finishing?” I joked, “In Turkey, we don’t ask men their salary, women their age, and we should not ask doctorate students when they graduate.” They all laughed and apologized. They rephrased the question to how my studies were going. “I came to Turkey to renew my visa but more importantly to gather information on representation of the Other in Turkey; in daily life,” I replied. Ibrahim Bey’s first reaction was: “How do you define ‘an other?’ If you go and ask people in our village who their other is, they’ll probably say, it is the neighbor village … they fight over the grazing rights in upland. It is so simple. Whoever you live nearby and have clashing claims over something, they will be your other.” He tried to recite a poem written by a folk-poet from his village. He could not remember the exact poem but explained that it described the
neighboring village as greedy and iniquitous, and reminded how the neighboring village killed a local of his own over grazing in a shared plateau.

Asking me how I define ‘the Other’ and giving me a ‘real life’ experience from his own village, Ibrahim Bey made me forget renewing my passport or the pages I wanted to edit. His interest in my topic faded away for a little bit, while he and my father started to talk about their childhood. During that melancholy, I tried to explain how I did not define the other but try to find out in the field. No one paid attention. I did not want to sound unnecessarily technical by lecturing them with a brief summary of my research plan. Their memories had already taken over the scene and they were not really with the rest of the table. Mehmet Bey and I stared at them and waited them to be back from the past. The waitress bringing a round of tea made us gather at the same time and space again.

Still trying to remember the poem, Ibrahim Bey told that he was just back from Israel. He mentioned he had been to Israel more than a few times and he was working on a grant application to go there again as a visiting instructor. When he talked about his trips or time in Israel, I could tell he was very excited. When I mentioned I would like to visit Israel, he took another sip from his tea and continued; “When you go there or Palestinian side, you will have a lot of data to write about. For example, let me give you an example. One day a friend of mine and I were hitchhiking. He, a Turkish too, told me “If a Jewish comes, you hitchhike, if a Palestinian comes, I will.” Listen.” And he laughed. He looked at me as if he sensed my confusion and added; “My friend on that day had long hair and long beard,” he used a Turkish phrase, “Saci sakali birbirine karismis, papaz gibi!” which means “his hair and beard is so long and unkempt, like a
priest”. He maintained, “I was well dressed and shaved … Normal. Proper way. That’s why my friend asked me to hitchhike if a Jewish driver passed by.” I had no idea how this memory was relevant to his idea that I would collect a lot of information there. Instead of this curiosity, I asked how they knew whether the driver was a Jewish or a Palestinian. However, Mehmet Bey intervened, “You see how they make a doctorate student work. They want to collect information from anywhere. They need it. But they deserve respect. Unlike us, America knows how to do this business. They collect information and use it.” I thought we were off the topic. Yet, later I noticed, it was certainly about my topic. Upon the ‘allegation’ of collecting data for America, I tried to reassure them that I was not collecting data for any government or any political institution. Two birds with one stone: Besides my compliance with the IRB regulations in delivering a summary of the consent form, I defended myself. They tried to ‘reassure’ or comfort me by telling that they did not think that I was doing research for America; at least not on purpose. But they all agreed that my dissertation would eventually serve America. My father was quiet. It was probably a silence of agreement, too. I was once again a blindfolded graduate student of Political Science or a student for America.

After convincing (!) me that my data will somehow serve the US interests, Ibrahim Bey retook the lead of the conversation. He commented that one did not need to go further to understand the grand strategy of the US that had been going on since the foundation of America. “I am teaching Arabic at the university,” and he added, “I use an Arabic grammar book written by University of Michigan.” I mentioned “we used the same book in college”. He continued, “Then, you should know the content of the book. Go over the reading practices, you will realize how even professors from University of
Michigan knew what was going to happen in the Middle East today. You will see that I am right." I intervened, "I read the passages in the book quite a long time ago. I am not sure how they are the precursor of today's events. The book is first published almost forty years ago and I guess you are talking about the Arab Spring, Right? Many years ago, did they foresee the protests in the Middle East?" Ibrahim Bey responded, "That's exactly what I am talking about. Those who wrote the book did not foresee what is now happening in the Middle East. They advised or deliberated what should happen in the Middle East. They talk about protests just like the Arab Spring. Now, the Western Media, and our slave-media [pointing some Turkish newspapers on the next table], call it spring. For me it is winter. They ignited the fire between brothers. They talk about woman rights and uprisings in the cities. They have a section called 'The Problems of the Arab World.' In that section, they talk about what we see on the news these days. So long story in short, the American already knew what was going to happen in the Middle East. Is it a coincidence? No. They put the seeds."

I was not convinced. I remembered the book; at least one section very well. It was about the development of the woman rights in the Middle East. I recalled it well because, for some reason, I liked the pronunciation of 'development' in Arabic. I had never thought that the parts on the problems of the Middle East could be a sign of an "American Project." I told him I was going to go over some passages with his point of view in mind. I did on the same day. Still, the book did not give me the impression Ibrahim Bey had. Perhaps, rather than deriving information from the book, he used the book as an example he needed to prove his belief that the turmoil in the Middle East was America's business. He needed the book, perhaps, to justify his idea that the Valley
of the Wolves—a popular Turkish TV show that has been controversial due to its non-Western or anti-Western ideological underpinnings—captured very well.

The claim that the American project in/on the Middle East was not appealing to me, at all. But it is appealing for so many people who find reality reflected in a TV show. Ibrahim Bey and Mehmet Bey—my father was still silent—were also quite confident in their image of the USA and its collaborator Israel. The latter, they asserted, was more than an alliance but the “brain” of America. The Jews (in their words “so-called chosen people”) should not have been trusted. They iterated verses from Quran to support their arguments. After sharing the original Arabic verses, they translated them into Turkish for me. The translation sounded involutedly. Yet, the lesson I was supposed to derive from the verses was, according to their approved summary, that “certain millets (communities based on religious affiliation, or nations) were not trustworthy” and “those,” to what or whom it refers was rather blurry, “were created in an inferior nature compared to Muslims.” I knew I was going to talk about these with my father later in detail. Yet, at that table, I could not see anything to discuss further. The divinity of the verses or the source of their images was off discussion or skepticism. I respected this and did not question the reliability of the religious sources. Besides, I could have embarrassed my father, if I did so.

I was already late for renewing my passport. I thanked my father’s friends for their friendly conversation. They thanked me for listening to them. Mehmet Bey asserted, “Thank you very much for sharing your research with us. If you think this conversation will be helpful, feel free to write about it,” and he smiled. Helpful? I was sure what we talked about was related to my dissertation but did not know what to do
with it. It was the deskwork and its place among many other representations—i.e.,
which trend it fits in—that were going to determine its usage. I got the consent but we
did not agree on how I should use their stories. I re-checked the official documents my
father brought and left.

It was one of those lucky moments of my stay in Turkey that summer. I was
expecting nothing related to my research to come out. I was supposed run errands and
sit at my parent’s dining table that I turned into my little office for the summer. However,
two friends of my father, who had been abroad more than a few times, showed interest
in my research. Their argument, for me, was not as justifiable as Ali’s account. Rather
than comparing interventions of the Western countries in the name of democracy and
trying to prove that the West only exploit democracy as a norm whenever they need,
Mehmet Bey and Ibrahim Bey mostly “sensed” the truth. Their interpretation of the
Ottoman history, which I have not described in details, portrayed the West—including
Israel—as an alliance of states that had a grand strategy in the Middle East through
“Lawrence(s) of Arabia.” Their assumptions ‘logically’ led them to interpret my
dissertation and the problems in the Middle East as serving the grand strategy of
America. It is not a truth I would internalize. Nor do I believe that Mehmet Bey and
Ibrahim Bey were paranoids who do not have any well-grounded images of the West.
Their sources or reference points—the Ottoman history, Quran verses, and their
experiences abroad—are definitely ‘real’ that they interpret the world through. They
were just not my realities.

Ibrahim Bey’s first response to my research topic: “If you go and ask people in
our village who is their other, they’ll probably say, it is the neighbor village,” make me
move my plan of visiting rural areas or villages to an earlier time. I usually disliked trips to the villages. Therefore, I never visited unless I had to for personal or bureaucratic reasons such as postponing my military service or funerals—No any other good memories. This time I was eager to go. I had to figure out the transportation. My hometown had changed a lot due to industrialization and the much-criticized increase of consumption culture—i.e., increasing number of malls or new ‘modern’ buildings. My childhood neighborhood became "old" and undesirable. Many people complained that the immigrants from Iran, Eastern Turkey, and recently Syria “pushed the natives [only those who could afford to do so] to the new neighborhoods.” Gentrified, clean, new, expensive and ‘immigrant-free’ neighborhoods. The changing demographics, increasing stratification of neighborhoods, modernization of transportation, and construction of new buildings and roads turned my hometown into a city that I sometimes struggle to live in. Through this physical and mental chaos I was in, I went to the new terminal for the village buses. I bought my ticket that cost me a few dollars. I was very early for the bus so I was able to take a seat on the very first row of the bus. It was a ‘brave’ move to sit on the first row as it is informally reserved for those who either know the bus driver well or are the elders of the village.

It was the first days of the 2013 summer. It was dry and extremely hot. I was in my comfortable shorts and t-shirt, and wearing flip-flops. I should have thought about my outfit more carefully since in the village I was about the visit, it could have been an awkward outfit. I knew it. Still I had overlooked such a simple and important detail for my trip. The first sign of the awkward situation I idiotically put myself into was the bus driver’s first question: “Selamun Aleykum. You are going to Felahiye?” [The larger
administrative unit my final destination village governed within]. I replied, “Yes”. He asked, “What business do you have there? Where are you from?” My reply was a brief summary of what I was, “I was born in Kayseri but my father is from Toraman. I need to figure out a couple of things about my military service—It was a lie. I’ll be back in Kayseri tonight.” He continued, “Do you live in Europe? Are you an Almanci? [A word referring to Turkish people who live in Germany. Yet, it became a pejorative category for any Turk living in Europe or more broadly abroad].” And I replied, “No. I live in Kayseri. Well, I live in America right now; for school.” He told me “Yeah. I knew you live abroad.” He didn’t tell how he knew, but his eyes pointed at my ‘awkward’ outfit. After asking where I was from or what I was going to do in the village, the next thing he was concerned about was which family I belonged to. Then, he asked what I was studying and what I was going to become. Political Science and teaching at a university were my answers.

In fact, I do not like questions about my job. Studying IR, I still do not know what my job description is. This first occurred to me when I had to report to military for postponing my service after graduating the college. In the office of recruitment in Felahiye, they had a long list of professions. The list did not include something like ‘International Relation-ist’ or ‘Political Scientist.’ The officers filled the form for my profession as if I were an instructor. They did not care what my degree was in. They did care, on the other hand, the institutions I received my education. One higher rank army office asked me, “So, you know about American foreign policy better than you do Turkish politics, right?” Like the army officers who granted another two years free from the military service almost a decade ago, the bus driver was more interested in the fact
that I was enrolled in Western or American schools. He told me that I was probably being trained as an American and wished me good luck in not forgetting my own nation. Then, he exclaimed, “America!” Looking at my smart phone that I was addicted to for checking e-mails, taking notes, and recording interviews, he continued, “I wanted to buy one of those. But they are too expensive here. Almost my salary. They must be so cheap for you guys. They sell it cheaper there, right? They make money out of us, not from their own people.” Like countless many other conversations, this chat also had its chapter on cheap electronics, name-brand clothes and cars, and the supposed “consumer-friendliness” of the American economy.

In Turkey, I was asked the prices of the computers, t-shirts, smartphones and certain brands in the USA. However, I was never asked about people waiting in line in Wal-Mart asking the cashiers to scan coupons after coupons so that they could buy more food with their financial aid checks or cards. Nevertheless, my smartphone, taking his attention, also revealed one of his concerns: Being spied on by America.

“I heard that America listens all the phones in the world. Especially these ones,” pointing at my phone, he commented. With a sudden unrest, I stuffed my phone and some papers in my backpack. He continued, “With the help of these phones, they locate where you are, what you are texting, talking, and whatever you do.” Wiki-Leaks or Snowden’s disclosure of classified files—including cases of massive monitoring of personal devices—was not even on the news. The bus driver was still afraid of being tracked. Not, really afraid! In fact, his tone gave me the impression that he was indifferent. He seemed to not care. He sounded as if he accepted being monitored by the great power, and he could do nothing. He told me, “We are not powerful. We don’t
have a state who would go and say ‘Stop. You cannot spy on my citizens; only I can.’
Our state is not man enough to do this,” and he laughed and lit another cigarette. Then,
he asked whether I smoked or not and told me that I could smoke when I got off the
bus. The privilege of smoking on a non-smoking bus was only for him. He was the boss.
And then we were back to ‘the phone.’ “I also heard, Israel makes a phone only for the
Jewish people. Even America can’t listen those phones. But you can get it, if and only if
you are a Jewish. If I am not wrong, America cannot, by any means, follow or listen
[these phones]. It is very high technology (…). They also say our engineers were killed
by the Israeli secret service. [The Turkish engineers] found something about the army.
You should know better. It was something about F16s. They want us to be dependent
on them. Those smart kids did not kill themselves. They were killed.”

He was talking about the incidence of engineers who committed suicide while
they were employees of a high-tech company providing research and development
projects to the Turkish army. Another person sitting on the other side of the row agreed
with the driver and said, “They say that those engineers broke the code to control F16s.
Israel sell those codes to us. Of course, they did not want us to become powerful. They
sell us seeds, modified seeds. A desert-country sells Turkey seeds while we have water
and all those fertile lands. It is bullshit, excuse me. We are supposed to sell them
agricultural goods, not the other way around. (…) They want to rent land in the South-
east [of Turkey]. Why? They know it is fertile there. They do not have land. They have a
handful [land] and no water. Still, they fly our planes and sell us seeds. We are trapped.
But I heard some time ago, they use the water filter plant the Ottoman Empire built. To
produce drinking water from seawater. Bravo to them! They respect the history and know to use what they have.”

I tried to tranquilize the atmosphere by explaining that a powerful Turkey would be in the advantage of Israel as it is almost the only secular state in the region. Yet, they reminded me, “Erdogan gives them [Israel] the answer they deserve. How he shut his mouth (...) One minute one minute. (...) He gives these sneaky bastards the answer they deserve.” The anger was intensifying. Alleged murder of the engineers, seeds coming from Israel, non-traceable phones for Jews, control of national F16s, and an incompetent state—except one “brave lad of the people” telling a great power’s leader to stop—were the sources of their sudden annoyance.

The conversation changed its direction when another passenger started to complain about his harvest of the previous year and speculated about the government subsidies. The last bad harvest was inflicted on the genetically modified seeds. Their interest in the Other faded away. It was obvious that their worries for income, harvest revenue, and government subsidies, and the ‘bad’ seeds were much more important than the Turkish-Israeli relations.

I wondered whether they would have talked about America or Israel at all, if I had not been on the same bus with them. This question had been bothering me since one of my meetings. During a conversation, one of my informants or ‘temporary friends’ frankly told me, “I am a teacher waiting for a position in a public school. My fiancé left me. I have no savings. There is no money, no car, or no house. My credit cards are full, up to their limits. I still get support from my father while I have a college diploma. I am working part-time answering phones. So, don’t get me wrong but I don’t give a fuck to
international relations. I don’t give a fuck who controls what or whom. Whoever pays me enough, I’ll work for them. I’ll support them. So, you can exclude me from your research. I have nothing to say.” I do not know whether it is fair to mention him while he asked to be excluded from my dissertation. Yet, his rebellion against ‘the relevance of my study’ still makes me question ‘where is really IR in human life?’

Having a triumph in reaching out random images of the Other during an ordinary trip, I was pleased. I was confident for my research despite the anxiety about the existential purpose of IR, in general. Yet, it could be a future project. I needed to be practical for my dissertation. Hence, I went on with my ethnography, “hanging out,” and arranging interviews.

A security officer on my college campus, ‘again’ pointing out my phone, responded to my opinion that living in America has its pros and cons, “You say there are bad sides of living in America, but you are using their phone.” My silent response was, and it was in English instead of Turkish (sometimes swearing in your second language is less embarrassing, even silently, than in your native language), “Come on. It is just a phone. For fuck sake, what’s wrong with you people.” And my ‘filtered’ response was, “Yeah. It definitely is a handy device. I can check my e-mails (…) But, after all, it is a phone. Just a phone.” Then, he continued, “But America tracks all your phone calls and information on the phone. Didn’t you watch the news? They are listening to presidents, armies, and even the people walking on the street (…). Will you stay in America or come back?” I replied, “I don’t know. It depends on the job market.” He advised, “You should come back. We need our brainpower. Why would you serve the foreigner? We
need our university graduates so that we can make our own phone; a phone America cannot listen.” Then, he left as his smoking break was over.

America did not only was the master of a global surveillance. The American also had privileges other nations could not have. American passenger planes, I am told, fly on the highest air route. It was a sign of higher dignity, status, and superiority among all the nations. It also indicated, someone in a local coffeehouse in Ankara told me, that America takes necessary precautions for the security of its own citizens. According to him, some US planes fly at an altitude that only Israeli planes could reach. “Could you believe this?” he asked me. It was a rhetorical question from a man impressed with Israeli-American superiority in politics, military and even civil aviation. I still replied, “No. I don’t believe it.” “When I fly to Turkey I usually see other planes including Turkish Airlines on the same altitude over Europe,” I commented. What was I doing? I was talking about planes. I felt awkward. Still, for him, the topic was serious and my flight was not “Only-Americans-flight.” The “superior flights” he was talking about was “only for Americans. Of course, A Turk could not be on it.”

Not only the planes or the phones, social media was also a sign of superiority and means of controlling. A young university student in Istanbul asked me if she could add me on Facebook as a friend. I met her and two friends of hers at a small café in July of 2013. Although I did not check my Facebook, I told her, she could definitely add me to her friend list. I did not really mean it. Her strict nationalist ideas made me want to stay away from her even on social media. Still, she added me to her social network right away on her smart phone, and complained about the “addiction to the social media among the young Turks.” She said, “Facebook is to keep the Turkish young busy all the
time; to trace what we do and where we are. It is a plan to block Turkey’s development by creating numb generations.” She sounded like a cousin of mine who complained about the same issue with almost identical words. She told me that she was using social media like the rest of her pier group. But, her purpose in using it was to stay in touch with the rest of the world. “You see,” she said, “I have just had one more friend from America. We need to know what the world is doing.” She was an active member of a nationalist party’s youth branch that, she advocated, worked for purifying or protecting the youth and the Turkish culture from impact of the West. I humorously asked whether this goal of her included giving up watching American or Western TV shows or not. We talked about the TV shows earlier that she admitted to be “obsessed with.” “I put everything aside and watch the new episodes even minutes after they are aired in America.” I found my question funny. But apparently she did not like my sense of humor. In a serious tone and with an angry facial expression, I was told that watching American TV shows and living the life portrayed in those series were completely different.

The West was scared of Turkey’s potential. Social media, entertainment industry, Hollywood movies, and the TV shows were all dangerous for the Turkish youth unless they approached them just for learning about the good virtues of the West; not to live the life the West live. Approach cautiously, as Ali Suggested.

**Turks on Display: Paranoid with Clinical Images Locked in Time?**

As I stated earlier, I was frustrated with the accounts of Othering I summarized above. I thought there was nothing new to write about. These perceptions were already explained or named as paranoia or schizophrenia stemming from the historical legacy
the Turkish republic founded within. They were outcomes of an elite project that created the new republic for the people who should be proud of calling their ‘self’ as Turk. Having been brought up in Turkey and receiving most of my education there, this has been in fact ‘normal.’ To hear or be surrounded by individuals lacking trust for other nations, scared of contemporary forms of Lawrence of Arabia, and explaining the turmoil the country in by the foreign powers intervening in the domestic politics were ordinary. To be honest, I cannot deny the fact that on several occasions, years ago, I agreed with most of these images since I did not have any alternatives (of truth).

After finishing my at-home-ethnography, I decided to disregard the information considered as paranoid. It was one of the ‘normal’ anomalies that I would hardly problematize. Yet, a brief conversation on my way to lunch with a colleague—while I was in the midst of my ‘deskwork’—sparked my interest in questioning what this notion of ‘paranoid Turk’ really was. First, I needed to understand the use of paranoia.

An initial research led me to a scholar who wrote on American politics and paranoia. I learned that one of the early uses of paranoia in Political Science or history was by Hofstadter (1964b) in The Paranoid Style in American Politics, first published as an essay in Harper’s Magazine and later as a book with the same title. Hofstadter’s essay was my departure in understanding how paranoia or paranoid personality is used in describing the perceptions of actors.

When I first read Hofstadter’s essay, I, first, highlighted the following:

American politics has often been an arena of angry minds. In recent years, we have seen angry minds at work mainly among extreme right-wingers, who have now demonstrated (...) how much political leverage can be got out of the animosities and passions of a small minority. But behind this I believe there is a style of mind that is far from new and that
is not necessarily right-wing. I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind (1964a, 77).

With a red pen, I circled the following words: “angry minds, extreme right-wing, paranoid, heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy.” They were my keywords in searching what the academia wrote about the trend from my fieldwork. The next point that I found relevant to my research was what Hofstadter wrote about the actors’ perception of their enemy:

The enemy is clearly delineated: he is a perfect model of malice, a kind of amoral superman—sinister, ubiquitous, powerful, cruel, sensual, luxury loving… This enemy is on many counts the projection of the self: both the ideal and the unacceptable aspects of the self are attributed to him. ...The sexual freedom often attributed to the enemy, his lack of moral inhibition, his possession of especially effective techniques for fulfilling his desires, give exponents of the paranoid style an opportunity to project and express unacknowledgeable aspects of their own psychological concerns (1964a, 83).

My initial response to his description of the paranoid style was that his topic was a special case of representation of the Other. It was an oversimplified approach to othering. I needed to go further in the literature with the guidance of the key ideas and words I circled in Hofstadter’s essay and book.

The first question I had in mind was if Hofstadter argues that paranoia was the word closest to adequately denoting the notion he was interested in explicating, then how paranoia is described. Does it really adequately evoke the representation or images actors hold about politics, or their social and political counterparts?

In his book Hofstadter, as Marcus (1999, 1) also summarizes, explains the distinguishing features of paranoid thinking as the following:
What distinguishes the paranoid style is not ... the absence of verifiable facts (though it is occasionally true that ... paranoid occasionally manufactures them), but rather the curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events. The typical procedure of the higher paranoid scholarship is to start with (...) defensible assumptions and with a careful accumulation of facts, or at least of what appear to be facts, and to marshall these facts toward an overwhelming ‘proof’ of the particular conspiracy that is to be established. It is nothing if not coherent—in fact the paranoid mentality is far more coherent than the real world since it leaves no room for mistakes, failures, or ambiguities. A feeling of persecution is central to the paranoid style, but whereas the clinically paranoid person perceives a world hostile and conspiratorial against him or herself, the spokesperson for the paranoid style finds it directed against a nation, a culture ... His sense that his political passions are unselfish and patriotic, in fact, goes far to intensify his feeling of righteousness and his moral indignation (Hofstadter 1964b, 4; 36; 37).

He articulates paranoid thinking as distinguished by “production of evidence” for defending “assumptions” or “for proving conspiracies” as “coherent, even more coherent than the real world.” Then, paranoid thinking is definitely a relative concept that depends on the conception of the “real world.” As Marcus, who argues that paranoia operates through conspiracies, concisely indicates, “Paranoia ... [is] a relative category of description based in part upon the question of whether in fact there is something 'out there,' or whether the paranoiac is simply delusional” (1999, 5).

Reading more on paranoid thinking, especially paranoia in politics, I have realized that it is not an exceptional concept in the sense that each study explaining or using the concept adds more defining features in accordance with their own approach to the issue. For instance, paranoia is defined as a form of “alienation from others that has gone beyond a sense of disconnection to one of persecution” and “the belief that people are conspiring against you and deliberately trying to harm you” (Mirowsky and Ross
Moreover, it is argued that societies having the feeling of powerlessness, victimization and exploitation are more susceptible to produce paranoid thinking (1983). I added new key words guiding my research on paranoia: “feelings,” perhaps “emotions,” “relative power,” and again “conspiracy.” Then, I found a book co-authored by “a psychiatrist who devoted his career to the study of political psychology and a political scientist who has long been concerned with the role psychopathology in political affairs” (Robins and Post 1997). The introductory chapters of the book provide detailed discussions of what paranoia is or what traits of a paranoid person are.

What is quite eminent in Robin and Post's study of political paranoia is that they regard paranoid thinking as a disorder. It is “…a personal disorder [that] is associated with a wide range of psychologies, from entirely normal to severely psychopathological” (1997, 3). I kept taking notes on a scratch paper ‘a worldview centered on the conspiracies—a pathological worldview.’ For the authors, there are seven elements of paranoia: 1) Extreme suspiciousness; 2) Centrality; 3) Grandiosity; 4) Hostility; 5) Fear of loss of autonomy; 6) Projection; and 7) Delusional thinking (1997, 7; 8-14). For them, the reasoning of the paranoid is “top-down” and the psycho-logic of paranoid is called paleologic referring to its primitive nature: “the logic of a child or of the primitive people trying to make sense of the incomprehensible” (1997, 9, Emphasis Added).

The definitional sections of the authors made me kept repeating “Foucault, Madness, Civilization and normal vs. abnormal.” Where is the point on relativity in this book, if any? It was the second chapter titled ‘Paranoid Culture and Conspiracy Thinking,’ where I came across a brief discussion on cultural absolutism. In the middle of the chapter, a subsection asks the following question: “If paranoia is the norm for an
entire society, can we call it paranoia?” and continues “One way of evaluating whether a behavior is pathological is simply to accept society’s own evaluation of it: a behavior is mad if the society believe it to be so and sane if that pattern is locally accepted” (Robins and Post 1997, 53).

Turning the page on “paranoia as the norm for an entire society,” the prime suspect of the case studies was there as a subsection: ‘Conspiracy Thinking in the Middle East’ (Robins and Post 1997, 54). It would be unfair, if I do not clarify that the Middle East is not their only case study. Mexico and White supremacists are of authors’ concern, as well. Yet, the Middle East was our common interest.

The subsection on the Middle East opens with an anecdote:

An American academic attending an international conference in Tunisia during the 1990 Persian Gulf War crisis was startled when a Tunisian colleague congratulated him on the brilliance of the US president. He went on to explain that ‘it was brilliant, brilliant, for President Bush to create the appearance of a major conflict in order, once and for all, to guarantee America’s oil supplies.’ (...) President Bush and Saddam Hussein had together conspired to create the appearance of an impeding war. They would then pull back from the brink and divide Middle Eastern oil between them. What startled the American professor was that he had always known his colleague to be a sensible man with no trace of emotional instability (Robins and Post 1997, 54).

The American professor’s friend was “a sensible man with no trace of emotional instability.” So was my grandfather who told exactly the same story/explanation about the Gulf War to us, his grandkids, again and again. And it was his uncle who warned him against a war for the sake of oil in the Middle East almost more than half a century ago. His uncle’s story was about a war between the evil of the Middle East and the Empire of the time in the future.
Reading the section on the Middle Eastern paranoia, the footnotes directed me to Pipes, the president of the *Middle East Forum* where the article that sparked my interest on paranoid thinking in Turkey was published. Daniel Pipes wrote two books on the issue. I decided to borrow the books from the library. On my way to the campus, I read, “(…) our knowledge of self and human subjectivity is a Western European-influenced knowledge. A basic assumption of this article is that there exist other, non-Western varieties of selves and human subjectivities that provide essential information for understanding human psychological and social behavior” (*Fabrega* 1989, 277). With this in mind, I started reading Pipe’s book on my way back home.

I started with his first book not because I wanted to go in a chronological order. I did so because its title was so memorable: *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy* (*Pipes* 1996). Probably, the last time I read something about a “hidden hand” was my junior year in college.

Pipes starts with the advice that whoever wants to comprehend the Middle East “must recognize the distorting lens of conspiracy theories, understand them, make allowance for them, and perhaps even plan around them. Conspiracism provides a key to understanding the political culture of the Middle East” (1996, 1-2). He argues that these “wrongheaded views have great consequences” and “it spawns its own discourse, complete in itself and virtually immune to rational arguments” (1996, 1). It shows itself in occasions ranging “from the most private family conversations to the highest public levels of politics” (1996, 1-2).

For Pipes, there are two dominant figures that are targeted by the conspiracies or conspiracy theories: “the Zionist and the imperialist (aka the Jews and the Christians)”
(1996). There are various types of conspiracies across the nations of the Middle East. Yet, Pipes argues that there are five basic assumptions in common: conspiracies drive history, everyone seeks power, benefit indicates control, coincidences do not happen, and appearances deceive (1996, 5). Unless you read Pipes’s sentences carefully, the introduction of the book can be seen as a fair description of what is going on in the Middle East. However, the adjectives such as “distorted,” or “wrongheaded” should/could be problematized.

Without going into more detail or resorting to a meticulous discourse analysis, I believe there are obvious examples in his book that demonstrates how ethnocentric and primordial his approach is. First, he indicates,

Specifically, I aim not to discredit the Muslim Middle East, much less to embarrass the individuals quoted. Rather, I have several constructive purposes for this study. First, by analyzing a key phenomenon I hope to help non-Middle Easterners understand the region’s political culture … Second, I hope to increase the possibility, however meager, that Arabs and Iranians themselves will become more aware of the invidious effects of conspiracism (…) This points to an important matter: those who benefit from liberal democracy must expose the dictators’ dirty laundry, for no one else will (1996, 7).

Those Middle Easterners including me (if my words are important enough by Pipes’s criteria) must write against the “paranoid mentality” that, for Pipes, “creates a suspiciousness impeding modernization in the Middle East” (1996, 13). We must do that while we benefit from the liberal democracies as most of us cannot write or discuss such matters in our “home countries.” I will not discuss what a “home country” or “benefiting from the liberal democracies” means. I only want to underline that I find it quite ironic that Pipes does not want to underestimate the Muslims in the Middle for
their wrongheaded perceptions, whose some assumptions I found similar to a realist in a liberal democracy—i.e. everybody seeks power—while he sees the dominant mindset in the Middle East as a constraint to modernization. He, later, asserts that conspiracism makes it difficult for Middle Easterners with common interest to work together or with the great powers (Pipes 1996, 27). I believe, for Pipes, one of the most serious obstacles for cooperation is the mindset of the people. For him, it explains quite a big share of the problems of the region and this deviation of the mind needs to be cured for the sake of the Middle East.

His second book on the paranoid mindset is Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes from (1997). In this book, he is more interested in the Paranoid thinking, in general, rather than paranoia being a particular problem of the Middle East. He originates the emergence of conspiracies back to the French revolution and explicates its evolution and diffusion in his study. He calls his second book “an interpretive essay, not a research study” (1997, xii). His book being not a research study must be the reason, I thought, why he did not clarify the source of a survey that shows that “conspiracy theories stems from two broad groups of people: the politically disaffected and the culturally suspicious” (1997, 2). In this book, he gives the reader a typology of different conspiracies—that are real—and conspiracy theories—that exist in the imagination. Conspiracy theories can have distorted impacts on politics and human life, but according to Pipes, “fortunately, tools do exist to identify them and these tools include common sense, a knowledge of history, and the ability to recognize the distinct patterns of conspiracism” (1997, 38).
Let me pause briefly before going further in my review. When Pipes argues that paranoid thinking is abnormal and should be alleviated for the progress and higher level of cooperation in the Middle East, he suggests tools to separate conspiracy theories or the paranoid thinking from the normal or the real: Common sense and knowledge of history. However, those who identify a mindset as paranoid and those whose mindsets are determined as paranoid might have two separate forms of common sense—especially in socio-political life—and perhaps two different forms of history. This means, the paranoid thinking can certainly be the Other’s normal stemming from their own common sense and understanding of what ‘really’ happened in history. This requires, in order to change or ‘fix’ a paranoid thinking, the dictation of a ‘normal common sense’ and ‘a particular understanding of history’ on the paranoid or more accurately the ‘abnormal,’ or convince them on the validity of ‘our,’ the normal’s, account of reality. This, I believe, indicates either colonization of minds or monopoly of standards-of-thinking of ‘the powerful.’

I was frustrated by the ‘images’ of US planes flying at the highest altitude as I found it very hard to believe. I also did not buy the stories of the cell phones designed uniquely for the Jews. Yet, I could not have questioned their sources when I was told “I heard it” or “they say.” I had even harder time to go further in my conversation when individuals referred to their holy books. I might not be a believer or a religious person. Yet, this does not mean that I can nullify the normality of the ‘believes’ or ‘emotions’ that these people find peace within.

Reading on the particular cases of Turkish Paranoia or different essays and commentaries using Turkish paranoia as the explanatory factor, two basic features are
emphasized: The impact of the Ottoman history and the impact of the elite (project of Turkish nationalism) on the people. No one is interested in even the possibility of other dynamics impacting the images the people hold.

The most recent incidents in Turkish Politics, social and political episodes in Turkish history, or Turkish bilateral relations with other states are popularly discussed with respect to Turkish paranoia. Former Prime Minister and the current President, R. T. Erdogan, has been portrayed as a state leader who has been ruling the country with a “paranoid fantasy” (Cole 2013, 1). It is reported that he has accused Israel and the United States of planning the corruption case in late 2013 for hindering the advancement of Turkish economy and regional cooperation between Turkey and its neighbors (2013). I watched Erdogan’s speech live on the news. He was furious and used a tone that was far from the diplomatic language we are normally used to. Several ministers from his cabinet joined him in accusing the external forces. For them “there were many spies among us” and “new ‘Lawrence(s)’ of Arabia were taking over the streets as they please.” To tell the truth, I could not stand listening to the press conferences. It was hard to believe. They were beyond my personal reasoning. I just dismissed them as ‘dirty politics’ as many others around me did. Still, surprisingly, in different contexts, those many others accused Israel and the USA of the unrest in Turkey.

During my research I noticed that Erdogan is not the only allegedly “paranoid Turk.” In the same vein, Israel and the USA is (sic!) not the only “hidden hand” (Pipes 1996) behind the ‘misfortune’ of the Turkish state. The controversial case of an elected female member of the Turkish Parliament, Merve Kavakci, is also regarded as an
instance of paranoia during which the Prime Minister of the time, Bulent Ecevit, openly declared Merve Kavakci, who chose to enter the Parliament without taking off her headscarf—which was against the legal dress code—as a provocateur supported by Iran” (Jung and Piccoli 2000, 91-92). The aforementioned PEW survey also indicates that ordinary people also have unfavorable attitudes toward Iran. Similarly, various other historical events such as attacks against non-Muslim minorities in September 6, 1995 or Turkey’s bilateral relations with other states are discussed with an approach regarding “Turkish paranoia” as the underlying factor shaping the Turkish side of the issues (Aslan 2011, Danforth 2011, Kemal 2012, Kuyucu 2005, Tremblay 2013).

Turkish paranoia is argued as an outcome of ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ (Jung and Piccoli 2000). The Treaty of Sèvres, which was implemented major powers of the first World War that occupied current Turkey and supported the religious and ethnic minorities once ruled by the Ottoman dynasty (Kirisci 2000), is thought to be creating the lens Turkish people see international relations through. Kirisci (2006, 100), who indicates the Sèvres Syndrome as influential in Turkish vision of international relations, writes, “Traditionally, Turkish thinking towards international relations has been deeply influenced by the Hobbesian vision. The international environment has traditionally been seen as being anarchical (…).” It is, then, the Treaty of Sèvres—and possibly other alike historical episodes dating back to the dissolution era of the Ottoman Empire—is what has historically constructed a paranoid and Hobbesian Turk.

Those who are familiar with the history of the Turkish Republic would easily agree with the proposed impact of the Treaty of Sèvres. Forefathers of the state ideology incorporated an elevated skepticism of any external powers and, through the
outcome of this fear; they justified extra-ordinary measures for creating and protecting a unified Turkish nation (Fuller 2008). All in all, the forefathers of Turkey faced a challenge of building a nation state with a population of various religious and ethnic groups inherited from an Empire.

To divide heterogeneous populations of multi religious and ethnic groups into ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ or to designate certain groups as menacing ‘minorities’ is an essential dimension of post-imperial nationalist projects (Kuyucu 2005, 364). In the case of the Turkish Republic, the founders faced “an embarrassing diversity of a demographic reality which was a legacy of the Ottoman mosaic” and “which produced insecurities and anxieties over the question of the constituents of an [national] identity … ” (Cizre 2001, 229). Having Turkishness as the main component of the national project, the formation of the new nation state inevitably excluded any minority once supported by and cooperated with the external powers. It built up a national discourse that framed the history of Turkish (in)security or the history of threats dating back to the Treaty of Sèvres. In other words, the Turkishness “was partly constructed through internal Others” (Alonso 1994, 228) and their great power collaborators. This led to the enduring importance of the treaties like Sèvres in keeping ‘the Turks’ together. The word ‘Sèvres’ became one of the words that have an enormous “emancipatory potential” (Muller 2008) in the maintenance of the national integrity.”

Sèvres syndrome is a fundamental component of understanding othering within the Turkish context. It is a notion, or even a regular phrase, to express the fear of the Turkish people regarding the ‘secret agenda’ of external powers and internal minorities to divide Turkey into smaller political units or national states (Hale 2000, 255). Minority
groups such as Kurds or Armenians have been pointed out as national security concerns in which European powers have played important roles (Danforth 2011, 18; 22, Kemal 2012, 1). This has constituted a “fear that continue to haunt some of the elite and the public opinion” (Karaosmanoglu 2000, 202). Minorities have always been regarded as secessionist that is why one of my uncles once referred to a family member, who did not join a big family gathering, as the ‘Armenian of the family.’

In Turkey the universal curricula—until recent decisions to exclude historical examples triggering enmity against neighbor countries, i.e. Greece, from national history books—was essentially implementation of Turkish dignity and the idea of staying cautious against ‘Others.’ Through different means, the Turks are taught not to fall into a trap similar to the Sèvres. Therefore, I agree with the idea that the Sèvres syndrome has a constant impact on the othering among the Turkish elite and public. However, that Sèvres Syndrome is ‘the’ factor forming the representation of the Other among Turks is what the literature suggests. Sevres Syndrome might be influential in shaping the images among the Turks. Yet, it cannot describe the composite picture that surveys and other studies point out pieces of. Despite their merits, these studies and explanations of othering or Turkish foreign policy with reference to “Turkish paranoia” have major flaws.

First, the fear of the other that is perceived as paranoia is considered as one of the outcomes of the elite project founding Turkey. It is noticeable that the legacy of the Ottoman Empire has maintained its impact on Turkey. The treaties shaping the collapse of the Empire have been preeminent reference points, which have been used as vibrant analogies in formation and maintenance of the new Turkish nation-state. Still, the
ordinary images should not be merely assumed as the product of the Ottoman history or its interpretation by the Turkish elite.

Considering representation of the other as shaped merely by the official discourse of a country will fall short. Representation of the other, especially in daily life, is a process with diverse components. It incorporates multiple reference points such as news, personal experiences and is impacted by numerous factors like emotions and other personal traits. It cannot only be a product of an elite’s imposition of an exclusionary discourse consolidating selective and discriminatory historical analogies. The dynamic daily life of individuals might contribute, change, or replace the Sèvres syndrome that is thought to be “haunting the Turkish elite and public” (Karaosmanoglu 2000, 202). Moreover, if various polls revealed that more than 80 percent of Turkish citizens believe that the United States and the European Union are working to destroy Turkey’s territorial integrity” (Danforth 2011, 18, PEW 2013, Poushter 2014) it does not have to be due to the impact of the inherited Ottoman history. More than 80 percent of the Turkish populace might regard the external powers as threatening for other reasons that the Sèvres syndrome cannot elucidate or the commentators cannot get sense of, ‘understand’.

Second, I believe the whole notion of applying paranoia in international or inter-communal relations is problematic. Oxford Dictionary English defines paranoia: 1) “a mental condition characterized by delusions of persecution, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance, typically elaborated into an organized system. It may be an aspect of chronic personality disorder, of drug abuse, or of a serious condition such as schizophrenia in which the person loses touch with reality;” 2) “suspicion and
mistrust of people or their actions without evidence or justification.” Another common usage of the term that Merriam-Webster defines: “a tendency on the part of an individual or group toward excessive or irrational suspiciousness and distrustfulness of others of others.” Finally, the medical definition of the term paranoia included by Merriam-Webster is: “a serious mental illness that causes you to falsely believe that other people are trying to harm you.” I am not sure whether the intention of any authors using “paranoia” is to denote the medical meaning of the term not. However, no matter whichever meaning is used, it should be safe to assume that the word commonly contains: “unjustified,” “unrealistic,” “exaggerated,” “disorder,” or perhaps “pathologically deviant.” However, I believe that regarding what is called “Turkish paranoia” as a representation of the other or othering, which is subjective and value based, and try to make sense of meaning-making of those who are accused of paranoia would provide a better grasp of the issue. This can be better achieved through interpretive methods as I applied in this study.

When one signifies a perception as paranoia, it is presumed that it is irrational and unjustified. It is unjustified on the basis of judge’s own reality or normal. However, the images people reported or portrayed are also real. At least, the images I tried to make sense were real. They were alive. They were what the people believed to be true. It is ethnocentric, not scientific, to label one’s belief as unreal. Each ‘self’ could have its own real meaning of its physical and social surrounding.

For instance, a day in the past can have conflicting or simply different meanings for a dyad on the self-other nexus. Think about the Israeli Independence Day versus Palestinian Day of the Catastrophe or Yom Ha’atzmaut versus Yawm an-Nakba. I am
sure for an Israeli or a Palestinian or people of the(se) land(s) far away from my desk somewhere in Florida, the comparison is more than of an example. Despite my over-simplification, this single day in history of two communities indicates an absolute example of how a ‘fact’ can be two different ‘facts’ for different self-groups. Or think about the old churches which I walk by every time I am in my Turkish hometown and which I have decided to visit again after reading Oded Löwenheim’s (2014) *The Politics of Trail*. A historical church converted to a mosque—sometimes into a gym or, sadly, a barn—can be a symbol of proud victory for a Muslim while it is a deep sorrow for those who once used the same space for their Sunday communal. It is a given fact under what conditions those buildings are or who owns it for what purpose. Yet, the subjective meaning making creates different realities for these places.

What is portrayed as paranoid perception of “the reality” is, I believe, a form of representation of the Other. It is not peculiar to key actors in the country or is not merely an outcome of macro-level factors. It is not an “extra-societal phenomena” that is projected upon the ordinary by the elite. The ordinary imagine, build and sustain their own reality, and behave accordingly in their daily lives. It is not only a single snapshot from the Ottoman history that people represent the Other with reference to. It is a collection of a wide variety of ‘subjectively justifiable, rational, and legitimate’ sources. It is not a practice or perception akin to a disorder that needs to be cured in accordance with a ‘self’s own truth.’ What is popularly called ‘paranoia’ is not necessarily a pathological social image or occurrence. It is a complex practice of representation of the other that incorporates various systems of knowledge, emotions, individual experiences, personal truths, and points of references. In short, those so-called ordinary paranoid
Turks that I have interacted and tried to understand do not see anything that is not existent; whether I liked it or not, they just see things differently.

**Not-So Paranoid Turks**

Calling images paranoia or paranoid thinking is an oversimplified approach that underestimates the complexity of people’s perceptions about their counterparts in socio-political world. I, myself, resorted to that notion various times before I decided to conduct research with the means of at-home-ethnography and attempt to make meaning of people’s meaning making of their Other. However, going to the field with a framework of analysis, I realized, only during my deskwork, that what has been called paranoia is in fact can and should be regarded as a process of representation of the Other. Doing so, first, considers the complexity of the images, which are a bundle of experiences, education, common sense, and emotions; and second, implies that those images are not deviated or clinical cases that need extra-ordinary precautions as remedy. Change is usually desired and there is no risk, I believe, to work to modify the images people hold for their Others. In fact, tolerance, peace, or at least cooperation is what we all desire instead of hostility. Yet, working to alter a normal and an abnormal necessitate different approaches. Hence, I believe approaching the images as representation of the Other would make a remarkable difference than approaching them as paranoid mindsets.

Before getting into my analysis of the stories, let me briefly draw a general picture in contrast with the approach that would label these images as paranoid. Although the number of the stories I have shared here are limited, they are rather exemplary and striking illustrations of one of the general trends among the ordinary Turks.
Ali was suspicious of the real intentions of the West. So were Mehmet Bey and Ibrahim Bey. The bus driver was suspicious of being spied on by America while he seemed to have accepted the fact that he could do nothing. So was the security officer on a college campus. They believed that Israel had “the code to run America” and “the code to operate the Turkish F16s.” Democracy was an idol that the West uses in accordance with its real interests and Israel produced non-traceable phones for its own people. New technology or social media were means to hinder the progress of Turkey. Money was the main means by which the West have leverage over Turkey or the Middle East, and the main reason why the West want to keep Turkey and Islamic world under control. Jews and Christians are the main “secret” enemy that direct plots against Turkey. They were the mirror image of the self that had both the desired properties such as developed technology and the unacceptable features such as lack of morals. Turks were betrayed once in the Treaty of Sèvres and there was no guarantee that they will never be deceived again as the West and its collaborators within the Turkish self always seek power and control over the lands of Turks.

“These are obvious examples of paranoia that so many suffer from in the Middle East,” Daniel Pipes would argue. Yet, this summary is what we see on the surface. Arguing that they “suffer from paranoia” is to claim that they do not fit the standards of normality. It is to argue that the evidences they use are self-produced and not in compliance with the “real world.” This mere focus on the images themselves but not the process or the general system they are situated within is an oversimplification.

One of the foundations of my research is the premise that representation of the Other is an institution. Therefore, unlike most of the studies focusing on the images and
evaluate them in accordance with a ‘truth,’ I believe these images are outcomes of complex systems of countless human acts and artifacts. Therefore, first, we should ask in which regime(s) of truth these people maintain or create those images.

The exemplary portrayals of the Other above highlight the inferior features of an Other, or namely the West—which is predominantly defined as the USA, the European states and Israel. As I discussed earlier, representation of the Other usually incorporates humiliation or de-humanization of the Other. In this particular set of portrayals of the Other, the West is usually perceived as inhumane against the non-Western societies, devious, selfish, profit and power seeking, and morally corrupted. Representation of the Other literature emphasizes the diversity of sources of knowledge that produce different images of the Other. For instance, Ali, by comparing similar political events and the West’s level of willingness to intervene in zones of conflict for normative reasons concluded that the West is not treating humanity as fair as it claims to do. He believes that the West uses democracy only for the West’s own sake. They do not value human life unless it is a domestic concern for Western societies. How Ali reached this conclusion was far from being abnormal or paranoid. He used contemporary examples and tried to support his argument. The conversation with Ibrahim and Mehmet Bey included their portrayal of the West as seeking a grand strategy in the Middle for long-lasting interests. The West, for them, planned the turmoil in the Middle East long ago. This was, they agreed, apparent in a language book. Their lack of trust was in line with the teachings of the holy book they believe in. The religious sources they cited taught them that some communities were created inferior to the Muslims and they were not trustworthy. Therefore, it cannot be argued that these
individuals report images that do not stem from real sources. Nor can it be argued that these portrayals of the Other are clinical cases. They were normal.

It is obvious that the stories of representation of the Other also include positive images of the Other. One obvious example is that the admiration for the technology the West posses and people’s rage against their own state for being a weaker state compared to the much desired stronger states of the West that could protect their own citizens. Apparent in many other episodes from my fieldwork, the ordinary Turks admired higher levels of development in the West. They also ironically praised Western economy for providing higher rates of prosperity to its own citizens. The belief that “higher quality” consumer products are easily accessible by the people of the West as their states guarantee cheaper costs for the domestic market was predominantly common among my interlocutors. I found it interesting because most of the individuals who found that the Western states provide easy access to consumption for their citizens as a positive feature also complained about the same economic system as an exploitative or imperialistic method used by the West. Similar to the application of democracy for people’s sake ‘inside’ and for the sake of West ‘outside,’ the economic principles form two sides of a coin.

Re-thinking about these cases of representation of the Other after the inspiring conversation on an online commentary on the “paranoid Turk,” I realized that they were clear examples of the categorization I had in mind before the fieldwork. Although I did not consider them as instances of representation of the Other but inclined to dismiss them as ‘not-original’ during my fieldwork, I noticed that I made the same mistake of overlooking these images like someone who call them “paranoia” would do. In fact, they
were clear examples of different forms of representation of the Other. Even a single individual held various forms of representation of the Other that I summarized in my introductory chapter.

In accordance with the reference points used as basis of truth, I classified othering as: Ecclesiastic (religious sources); Social (common knowledge or the leading figures of a society as referred source); Education-based (official system of educating the new generations as the source of knowledge); Learned (individually reached out sources); and Fuzzy (sources that are not clearly identified). Ali referred to Machiavelli whom he read for a humanities course for engineers. He also referred to various religious sources he believed in. Both ecclesiastic and education-based representation of the Other were components of his portrayal of the Other. Ibrahim Bey and Mehmet Bey clearly designated Quran as their source of truth. They were not paranoid. They, I believe, reported ecclesiastic type of representation of the Other which we might have difficulty in understanding if we grant legitimacy to a limited number of knowledge sources.

The bus driver who was interested in my phone revealing his point of view about the USA and Israel told me “they say” or “they talk.” Although not obvious when put in words in these pages, he was confident about the trustworthiness of those who told him that the Turkish engineers were killed by Israel for protecting its monopoly over the military technology. It later occurred to me that the bus driver was, in fact, referring to the society, his commonsense. Therefore, unlike Daniel Pipe suggests, bus driver’s use of commonsense was not for distilling the “paranoid” and the “real.” His commonsense helped him to justify his portrayal of the Other. The situation is similar for my interlocutor
whom I met at a traditional coffeehouse in Ankara. He believed that the American
passenger planes fly at an altitude that no other flights were allowed. “They say,” he told
me. He referred to a larger social group or people around him. Later, I realized that this
could be an example of social representation of the Other which means representation
of the Other resorting to society or leading figures in the society as reference points. It
could also mean fuzzy othering as when my interlocutors told me “they say” as their
source of knowledge, they were unclear about who they really referred to. These
individuals obviously heard the news on the grapevine. Rumor obviously had an impact
on representation of the Other; on the knowledge individuals hold about the world.

It was obvious that the society kept certain news or images—superiority of
America or phones peculiar to Jews—alive. It was infuriating for them to see the Other
as the powerful while their own state was incapable of protecting them. The person I
met in the coffeehouse was impressed by the American state that secured its citizens.
He was also troubled by the fact that his state was incompetent. Similarly, the bus driver
was also hopeless that his own ‘self’ was not strong enough to stop the great power
spying on the Turkish citizens. Hence, America was a state that was admired for
reasons such as its global power or its strength to protect its citizens, while it was self-
interested or selfish to exploit the other weaker states such as Turkey. These individuals
accused the other for seeking power. Yet, they also admired the very same component
of world politics they attached inferior meanings when it is held by the Other. In other
words, power would have had a positive meaning if held by the Turkish self while it had
negative connotations when the Other possessed it.
During my re-consideration of what I encountered in the field I have realized that my framework of analysis did not include at least one aspect of representation of the Other that can be as important as other features I incorporated in my priori conceptualization. After writing down the conversation that took place on a bus, I have realized that the passengers and the bus driver got very angry with America, Israel, and to an extent Turkey. They were furious that Turkey imported seeds from Israel. They were hopeless that Turkey was unable to stand against America or Israel—with the exceptional case of Erdogan as a heroic (state) leader. They were not pleased about the situation that they found their states and themselves in. No calculations, no explanations, no policy suggestions, no discussions on what should be done. They were merely angry and unhappy. They did not want Israel, which was a negative metaphor for them, to control the Turkish air forces. They did not like it. I could tell they were angry while I was on the bus with them. Yet, it was during my deskwork I noticed that emotions could well be part of representation of the Other.

I based my framework of analysis on the aim of trying to understand the ‘subjective reasoning of ordinary Turks in assigning meaning to the Other.’ My focus on understanding the reasoning of the individuals was limited to make meaning of sources they refer to, kinds of representation of the Other they maintain, and whom they see as their Other. I also had a general question of how representation of the Other work which left room for the surprises of the fieldwork. Yet, conducting at-home-ethnography, I lived, to a large extent, the normal I was used to. Hence, I could not always see what was going around me. When I downloaded “Modernity and the Emotions: Corporal Reflections on the (IR)Rational,” by Simon J. Williams, I noticed my framework of
analysis left almost no prior space to emotions that might have influenced or shaped people’s daily life hence their representation of the Other in ordinary times.

Williams states that “historically and to the present day, emotions have been regarded as the very antithesis of the detached, scientific mind and the quest for objectivity, truth and wisdom” (Williams 1998, 749). Although I considered myself conducting interpretive research that left space for the “agent’s role” in my analysis, I, too, overlooked the importance of the “emotions.” I was unconsciously attached to, in Williams words, “rationality as a passionately held belief or cherished ideal” (1998, 746). However, as applied in “trust in international relations” (Michel 2012), emotions should not be excluded from representation of the Other. In other words, a discussion on representation of the Other without the impact of emotions will fall short in grasping the dynamics of the process of assigning meaning to an Other.

Ali was calm and discussed world politics “rationally.” He shared the ‘real’ events that took his attention from world politics. He opposed to the idea of an armed conflict against dar-al Harb. He criticized capitalism or he told me that he refused to live a life for the sake of the millionaires in America or for the sake of the Jews who run America. Yet, it was the attempt of Burn a Quran day protest that made him uncompromising. When I mentioned it or we started talking about the protests, he swore and told me “not to give a fuck to them; God had his hell for them, anyways.” Suddenly he wished those to be burned in the fires of the hell. His tolerance seemed to have faded away. It was obvious that any attack or even the idea of attacking anything sacred for him revealed a frustration. The person who initially talked about America and Israel in a calm manner
lost his patience and reminded me the purpose of God’s hell: for those who even think about burning a Quran.

In a sense, when the issue we talked about had more remarkable, immediate and negative effect on people’s life or their identities, their anger intensified. The anger was multiplied with their despair in being able to do nothing in return or not being supported/advocated by their state in world politics. They seemed to have accepted that their phones were tracked by great powers. However, they could not have accepted the fact that their own state was incapable of defending them. They were emotional. The emotions obviously played role in their ‘sudden’ perceptions. Their feeling of powerlessness seemed to be in effect and it had emancipatory power in creating hostile attitudes toward the Other.

**Different Realities**

An interpretive fieldwork is a never-ending endeavor since it is based on the aim of ‘understanding’ human meaning-making that can have transcending boundaries depending on the topic. It is the author who creates blocks of events with limited space and time dimensions in order to craft ‘research reports.’ In my research, a conversation after returning back from Turkey ignited my interest in stories I initially dismissed with the idea that there was nothing interesting or worth sharing to write about. Yet, after re-considering those stories with a review of literature I previously not familiar with, I noticed that the stories were in fact ‘my normal’ that I did not problematize during my stay in Turkey. They were stories that of images of the Other that so many scholars would consider paranoia.

As I tried to show in this chapter, those images were not products of a paranoid mindset. They were not clinical cases that were far from grasping the ‘reality.’ They
were products of a reality. A reality that was not mine. Those images were different forms representation of the Other. The individuals I met in Turkey were members of their own regimes of truth that I might be partially surrounded by—yet, not fully aware of. Ecclesiastic, learned or social othering were examples of representation of the Other I came across and shared in this chapter. Yet, I noticed or conceptualized those stories as different forms of representation of the Other during my deskwork, after re-reading and re-listening to my conversations. Emotions could upsurge the attitudes that people have towards their other. Their anger could bring more hostility within minutes. As I emphasized earlier, interpretive studies are full of surprises that requires flexibility. As my study shows, they can be perfect forms of ‘travel to the self’ or ‘re-discovery of one’s own self.’

These are details or dynamics of representation of the Other among the ordinary people. Individuals who might have participated in a PEW survey or about whom conclusions are drawn as paranoid might be members of a certain percentage of a population who reports negative attitudes any other country but Turkey. Yet, mystory, I believe, clearly indicates that representation of Other can be partial. People might report negative images in an attitudes-while they also have positive images accompanying those feelings. This could be understood only through interpretive methods like the one I employed in this study.
CHAPTER 4
ORIENTALISM WITHIN THE ORIENT

Taking the Ottoman Jacket Off under Adult Supervision

Many years ago I asked myself, “What is wrong with our past?” “What makes this young doctor the boss who can tell this poor old lady the true way of life?” It was early in the morning, right before a doctor appointment. My father dropped me off at the hospital and went to the school right across the street where he was teaching. I knew what documents I needed to get signed or where to get my prescription. I was old enough to wait for my appointment. Therefore, it was safe to leave an eleven-year-old at the hospital alone, he must have thought. However, that morning, I was not old enough to understand the disturbing encounter between two women. I did not ask my elementary school teacher—who was my authority of knowledge—to explain the tension. My teacher was already ‘unhappy’ with my inquiries. Hence, I could not find an answer for my lingering question.

On a fresh spring morning, I was at the hospital so early. My father got me one of the earliest appointments for an eye-examination. On the second floor, I was waiting at a gloomy corridor. It was empty. There was only an older lady—perhaps in her sixties—waiting to renew her prescription for, as she told me, “a woman illness.” The rest of the patients must have known that the doctors in public hospitals were never on time. That must have been why it was almost after an hour that other patients started to gather in the corridor. The patients out-numbered the benches in that all white, cold, and shadowy corridor which was decorated only by doctor’s name next to the doors. There was also a large and shiny sign giving gratitude to the donor—probably the sign was as
expensive as the benches—who provided the necessary money to “furnish the waiting room.”

Before all the other patients had started to fill the corridor with all the humming, the doctor the old lady was waiting for came in. She asked one of the nurses to bring tea for her and to close the door. She was the first doctor to arrive. Her patients were ‘lucky.’

The old lady knocked on the door. With a rather shy and timid voice, she greeted the doctor, “Selamun aleykum kizim” [Peace upon you my daughter] and asked, “I am here to renew my prescription and I have a grandson at home. My neighbor is looking after him now. Can you sign my prescription? I need to go home!” I did not see the doctor, but her voice filled the entire corridor. With an authoritative tone, the doctor told the lady, “Teyze” [aunt in Turkish, but used to address older women in a rather informal or ordinary fashion], “First of all, do not greet me with ‘Selamun aleykum.’ I don’t know Arabic. What happened to ‘Gunaydin’ [Good morning in Turkish]? Why not ‘Merhaba’ [Hello in Turkish, but originally, and ironically, Arabic]? Please, I am not your Hajj friend! I can’t sign or renew your prescription now. Wait outside! We’ll call your name when it is your turn. Drop your papers at the nurse’s table. We are not selling bread and cheese here. It is a hospital!” The patient left the doorstep embarrassed. She sat down and told me, “They are doctors. She knows better than we do. If they say wait, we wait.”

The role of the patient was over. She could not get her prescription signed earlier. However, the doctor’s scene went on. No image of her. She was in her office, while the door was open. From where we were sitting, we could only see the sun shining through the open door. Yet, doctor’s voice was filling the entire corridor. She
was loud and furious. She was probably talking to the nurse who had just brought her a cup of tea. She was complaining about how the citizens of Turkey were still so uneducated. She was asking, “How can they still greet someone with *Selamunaleykum.*” I personally dislike(ed) the phrase because I was not really good at pronouncing it. Or, I should say, I did not feel ‘man’ or ‘grown-up’ enough to use it. But doctor’s approach was different. Her discontent was because of the fact she could not have understood why people “were not able take the Ottoman jacket off.”

She was delivering a lecture to the nurse, and repeating the question: “When are these people going to take the Ottoman jacket off? It is all about this. Once we take it off, we’ll be really civilized.” I was not confused. I was just mad. I was upset for the lady who could have done nothing but kept smiling when the doctor was cursing an entire group of people “like the lady who had just used *Selamunaleykum.*” I was not sure what was wrong with the Ottoman past. More importantly, I was asking myself, “Who the hell she thinks she is? What did this poor lady do?” My day passed with the same routine of school after my eye-examination. But I wondered what that old lady felt? Perhaps, for her, it was nothing but an insignificant argument. Perhaps, it is my political scientist side that value and intensify the meaning of this incident after almost two decades. Yet, sitting at my desk typing these pages, I still feel the bits of the rage the doctor evoked on that fresh spring morning.

When my father came home that evening, he asked for my new prescription. When I gave it to him, I talked about the old lady. It was one of my favorite moments when I sit by my father to tell him about my day. He always enthusiastically listened my
stories. However, that particular story did not really take his attention. He eagerly ignored it.

A few weeks ago, I had delivered him a verbal note from my schoolteacher, who was also a friend of him. My teacher ‘ordered’ me to tell my father a Turkish proverb, which literally is, “You cannot carry two watermelons on one arm.” It advises that you cannot do two tasks at the same time. My schoolteacher told me that if I had told my father about my speech in the debate team and the proverb, he would have certainly understood. My father understood and told me not to read any books on history without consulting him, “at least not yet,” he emphasized. My teacher’s note to my father must have had something to do with my father’s reluctance in commenting on my hospital story.

As part of our history class, I was assigned to participate in a debate-team. I was supposed to support the idea that the founders of the Republic were not only struggling against the Western occupation but also against the Ottoman dynasty, particularly the last Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed VI, or Vahdettin. I had to prove my assigned position against a friend of us who decisively advocated that Vahdettin helped M. Kemal Ataturk travel to Anatolia to initiate the war of independence. We were so mean towards that friend of us. As children, we were really cruel. Rumor was spread that she was the daughter of very religious man. It was gossiped that she was wearing headscarf in private. The entire family of hers ‘secretly’ hated modern Turkey, we whispered around. And there, in class, she was advocating a history of cooperation between the Ottoman dynasty and the founding father of the Republic. She must have been “brain-washed,” my friends and I concluded.
Having been assured by my victory in that debate, I went home to prepare my speech. I went through “A” and “V” volumes of the encyclopedias at our poorly equipped bookshelf. They did not tell much about the details of any confrontation between Ataturk and Vahdettin. There were just a few sentences that would have supported my position. I noted them down. Then, I saw a series of book—I guess it was two volumes—on the treaty of Lausanne. I grabbed the first volume and started reading it. It was an old book. The language was so ostentatious. I hardly understood it. Yet, even in the preface of the book, the author wrote that the treaty of Lausanne was a failure. He also argued that Ataturk received aid from the Ottoman dynasty to flee Istanbul for Anatolia and started the war of independence with the support of the Sultan. I was shocked. My victory in the debate I was very sure about was already a lost cause. I wrote down what the book was telling about the role of the Mehmed VI in saving the country and put it back. To be honest, I have never touched that book again.

It was the day of the debate. My friend wanted to start the discussion by delivering some historical ‘facts.’ Yet, I told my teacher that there, indeed, was no point to have a debate as I agreed with my friend. I told everyone that I read a book supporting our friend’s account. By then, one single book was enough to believe in a ‘fact.’ My teacher told the class that I was probably misinformed. She dismissed the class and told everyone that she was going to explain everyone the ‘real history’ the week after. Then, she approached me and asked me to deliver ‘the note’ to my father; “You cannot carry two watermelons in one arm.”

My father had no idea which book I went through or no idea what was the debate about. He heard what happened when I told him the words of my teacher. He said, “Tell
your teacher that the message is taken. And make sure that she knows you did all the
research without help. But from now on, do not read everything you find. Those books
are too complicated for you. Read what your teacher assigns. I will also meet he.”
Things were really complicated. Nonetheless, I, simply, learned that I was not supposed
to read anything without the supervision of an ‘adult.’

I certainly experienced the dilemma of ‘forgetting’ a past and ‘being shaped’ into
a present through the official discourse of the Turkish state. On the one hand, belonging
to a society as the “grandchildren” of a “mighty Empire” who were proud of having ruled
the three continents “with peace, justice, and prosperity” and on the other hand being a
“modern Turkish citizen” given the purpose of “reaching the level of the civilization which
can be hindered by the traditional” formed the world I was located in. I always
considered myself a “Westerner” as much as a “Middle Easterner.” I am a hybrid ‘self’
with his ambivalences, dilemma, confidence, shame, belongings, isolation and
exclusions. I belong to a hybrid society about which I decided to write later in graduate
school. It is a society that harbors a discourse of the colonizer and the colonized. A
society of individuals that are sometimes more oriental than the prime-suspects of
Orientalism. It is a self that is composed of “occidental orientalists”—I spontaneously
coined this term when I wanted to refer to my interviewees during a conference where I
presented an earlier version of this chapter.

One of the salient trends of representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks
was the conversations that resembled the discourse of colonialism in various aspects.
Although Turkey does not have a past of colonization similar to other countries, the
discourse among the ordinary Turks resembled most of the popular cases or more
obvious histories of colonization. What is surprising or interesting about the presence of representation of Other in the form of the discourse of colonization is that Turkish people consider themselves as the colonized and the colonizer at the same time.

When the superiority of the other is stressed or the inferiority of the self is mentioned, the discourse of the victim appears on the surface. The self is usually pictured as the backward exotic ‘East,’ which results in the controversial case that I define as ‘Orientalism within the Orient.’ The self is partially considered as belonging to the East. However, when the self is thought to be superior, the self is mostly excluded from the East and it considered as the inferior that needs to be educated in accordance with the Turkish principles such as religious moderation or learning the virtues of the Western civilization. Most of the ordinary Turks I communicated with portrayed the Turkish self as "both Western and Eastern while neither Eastern nor Western". A sense of hybridity was apparent and most of my interlocutors found being Western and Eastern at the same while not ‘clearly’ belonging to either as a sign of lack of national characteristics. Finally, the self-appealing aspects of the representation of the Other are usually denoted through masculinity, adulthood, or youth. Similar to the colonial discourse I discuss, femininity, childhood, or old-age are used to degrade the Other.

Confrontations: Darker Skin, Cultured, Headscarf, Modern, East and So On

The subtitle might, at first, sound meaningless, vague and confusing. If so, I believe it serves its purpose. During my fieldwork, I thought that Turkish society was a community of confrontations. What they opposed was many. Many enough to make it harder to name one singular entity or identity as ‘the Other.’ No one or nothing seemed to be ‘the Other.’ Yet, everyone and everything could be an Other at any time. Within
this multiplicity, the confrontational tone was ubiquitous. The interaction between the colonizer and the colonized was constant.

For so long I have had my personal wounds of being in between the West and the Middle East, or being both while cannot be either wholly. However, I have never been 'annoyed' due to any of these belongings until a very recent 'incident.'

In March 2015, at a local bar in my college town, I was criticized for “having the luxury of generalizing about the Americans while an American could not generalize about the Middle Easterners.” I was offended and repeated a few times that I was not a Middle Easterner. And the worse came from a man in his early 40s, “Okay. Let me use, not Middle Easterners but those who come to the States to blow our buildings up.” My reaction was a shocked face and a “fuck off.” I told him that for the first time in my life I had been accused of blowing up buildings. He did not care. I left the scene and went to the patio. His friends later tried to assure me that it had nothing to do with me but the accuser was too sensitive about the recent terror ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) caused in the Middle East. They also added that he was influenced by FOX news. I summarized my thoughts with the popular phrase In vino veritas and did not even listen to the rest. I took the next bus home and slept on the words “the Middle Easterner.”

This was the most extreme case of my being a Middle Easterner. There were many other incidents of being from the East. If I read in between the lines of my life, I am sure I can increase the numbers of the ‘incidents’ being a Middle Easterner. The word ‘incident’ for being called a Middle Easterner is not a coincidence. I have to confess that it is the first and only word that comes to my mind to describe the situations I am related to the region. In the field, I noticed that various others see ‘being called a
Middle Easterner’ as an ‘unfortunate incident’ or far from the reality. I knew and experienced it in my daily life in different degrees. However, I have never professionally questioned the attitudes of ‘my self’ towards the categorical identities they have to live/suffer from until I thought about the everyday use of culture or Kültür (in Turkish) and cultured/civilized or Kültürlü/Medeni in relation to ‘being from the Middle East’ or ‘being a Westerner’.

It was during a graduate course, IR and Culture, I took at the University of Florida. There was an in-class discussion on the meaning of culture. My mind was already occupied with the notion of Kültürlü. It is a ‘social-label’ or a mental short-cut used in Turkey. I was not even sure whether the meaning I had in mind was my personal experience that would have no any further meaning or it was in fact a general trend. By then, I was still not sure whether the personal would matter or not. That is why I did not share my thoughts in the class. Later, during my fieldwork, I was assured that Kültürlü meant ‘the modern’ who adopts more Western tastes or who is ‘educated’ and adopts a more Western life style. It was not solely my personal experience. My definition of Kültürlü was a popular/common-sense image in the society I was brought up.

For so many ordinary Turks, the West or the Western, and the East and the Eastern were categorical imperatives. They were sometimes negative sometimes positive value points used as reference points to evaluate the degree of being civilized or one’s being Kültürlü. They were sometimes equal to a child, a feminine, a spoiled teenager, a traitor, an underdeveloped, an immoral or a superior. They were the
colonizer or should-be-colonized. They were the unwanted child of a family or the mother who would deny the existence of her own ‘ugly child.’

It was a very hot summer day in July 2013. I was in Istanbul and going to meet a couple friends of mine from the States. They were in Turkey for a conference. We decided to meet in one of the tourist attraction sites called the Hill of Pierre Loti. The Hill is named after the famous French novelist about whom I later read a book titled Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman (Szyliowicz 1988). While I was reading the book, I found it ironic that I had a conversation with a Taxi driver who made me think about orientalism. I was on my way to a popular site of one of the most ‘Oriental cities’ named after a French Novelist that “Nazim Hikmet, a famous Turkish poet, ridiculed for being an orientalist” (Turberfield 2011, 134).

The Hill is famous for its beautiful view of the Golden Horn, and located in a district that used to be populated by various minority groups—non-Muslims—of the Ottoman Empire and later Turkey. On that day, I decided to take a taxi to be on time so that my friends would not make the joke, “to prove that you are a Turk, you must be late to all of your meetings.”

I called a taxi. After less than five minutes, I was on my way to meet my friends. Getting into the taxi, I greeted the driver, told him my destination and got my book out of my bag. Even before I read a word, the driver asked me what I was reading. I told him the title. He said that he had not read a book since elementary school. Then, he asked where I was from and where I lived. I explained my geographical belongings. When I asked him which part of Istanbul he was from, he replied, “I live in Istanbul but I am not
from here. I wish I could have become an *İstonbuler*. But my darker skin does not allow me to be so. Not only Istanbul, anywhere in the Western Turkey.”

I was stunned. Telling someone that she looks like a Westerner—usually lighter skin, colored eyes et cetera—have been always a compliment in my social circles. But I had never heard anybody speaking of his or her skin color as a negative demarcation in Turkey. I didn't hide my curiosity and continued, “In America I hear people talking about skin color [as a category] but here in Turkey you are a first. Okay. I'll be honest with you, some people believe that the Kurdish people have darker skin, more facial hair, you know. I don't know, I must sound silly. Are you Kurdish?” He replied, “You just hit the Bull's eye. I am. Everyone can tell it just by my skin color. Darker. (...) I am the bear in the city. (...) Rude, ignorant, uncivilized… They pass at the red light and yell at me as if it is my fault! They don’t use their blinkers while they turn left, but I am the one who doesn’t know how to drive. (...) I live in Istanbul maybe longer than ninety percent of those people, but I can’t change my skin color, my accent. I will be always a bastard in this city, in this country. But the worst, when I go to Europe to visit my brother who got a degree from Sorbonne, I am a Kurd and a citizen of Turkey. In Europe they don’t like Turks.” Laughter, “You see my brother, no matter what I do, I will be the scapegoat wherever I go. Maybe I should move back to the East, where people see me as a spoiled-city man. You see. *Damned if I do, damned if I don’t*”

I forgot about my book. Since I had never been to that part of Istanbul, I asked a couple of questions about the neighborhood. He told me that so many non-Muslims used to live in that district and day by day it is becoming more Muslim. He complained that the government was turning everything and everyone into a Muslim. The
government, he said, wanted to even restrict his drinking. He then continued to give brief information about some landmark architecture. While we were passing by Greek Orthodox Patriarch or Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, he pointed out and stressed, “And here is where all the games are set.” At first, I did not understand. I was looking for a stadium or a sports facility. I asked “What games?” He replied, “This is where they decide how to divide Turkey and hinder our development. Patriarchate. The games over Turkey. The Western powers and their minority compradors decide on plots to divide us right here.” It was a perfect time to resort to one of my research techniques. I wanted him to free associate some words and asked him, “Is this what you think of the West? Is it what the West mean to you?”

The taxi driver did not really censor his words. When he described what he thought about the West, the first word he used was “whore.” He was among many other male interlocutors who thought of the West as a “treacherous slut.” It was like a “beautiful, seductive, and irresistible woman with no morals or whatsoever.” He told, “It is the civilized world. Yet, they have no morals. They want to exploit us with the help of the minorities in Turkey. They want our natural resources, labor, and land. They will be better off if they could enslave us. And it will happen. We are stupid. We are trying to enter the European Union for years. What happened? Nothing. We are like a bastard to them. No matter how much we change to be like them, they will never like us. But what else can we do? Should we form a union with those Arabs? It would be a disaster.”

Having got confused whether he was talking about the Kurds, Turks, or Turkey in general—I assumed he was talking about Turkey—I intervened, “You have just said Arabs. Why shouldn’t Turkey turn its face to Arabs or to the East?” He confidently
replied, “to the East where all the problems are? Is that what you want? They are treacherous. All they care about is money. They are godless.” I had to intervene again, “I thought you were uncomfortable with the Islamization of the country. Why do you care if the Arabs are godless or not?”

He stared at me stunningly. I got the message that I had just said something wrong. Or being godless was meant something more serious than being not a Muslim or unrest with the increasing religiosity in public. He clarified it for me, “Of course I believe in and scared of Allah. I am not a Muslim like those who rule us are. I am scared of Allah and try not to do any wrong to any human being. But I am not a bigot. Bigotry is what our government does with its Arab financiers these days. Listen to me, stay away from the East. If you can, stay in America. Don’t come back.” I smiled. “Well, I miss Turkey,” I said. I was almost at the tea garden. He stopped the car and told me to walk a few minutes. He did not want to enter the narrow street where he could have got stuck in the traffic of the tour buses. “It is 33 liras but give me 30. The first tea is on me.” I thanked for the gesture. While I was getting out of the taxi, he repeated, “Don’t come back. Stay there. When you come back, bigotry will have taken over in this country, if we are still not enslaved. We’ll be no different than the Arabs.”

It was a pleasant commute. The architecture, the view, and the breeze made me forget the unpleasantly hot weather. I was quite rude during the conversation. I had to keep typing the key points of our conversation on my phone. I was not expecting such a revealing dialogue. I hoped that I did not look as rude or careless as I thought I was. At the tea garden, after a short walk, I found a table to wait for my friends. Luckily they
were late, and I had some extra time to write down the conversation while every single image was fresh.

Much like the taxi driver, a tourist guide in front the Hagia Sophia Museum indicated his unrest with the Arabs, the government and the West while he also admired the culture of the Western societies. The Hagia Sophia museum must be one of those places where different ‘worlds’ come together. In her book, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*, Navaro Yashin starts one of her chapters with a brief anecdote taking place in the same place. It is a dialogue “between two Turkish women—one veiled, the other not. The woman with short hair, dressed in a skirt to her knees is first thought to be a ‘Westerner’ by the women wearing a black veil. Similarly, the Western looking woman stereotyped the woman with black veil as an Arab” (Navaro Yashin 2002, 19). I was not in front of the Hagia Sophia Museum because I was looking for a similar encounter. I read Yashin’s book later. I was simply waiting for my sister who wanted to see the museums, which I had seen several times. Being on a limited budget, I did not want to spend more money. Moreover, I only had my Florida State driver’s license on me and could not have got the Turkish citizen discount for the museum since I could not have ‘proven’ my Turkishness.

Waiting for my sister, somebody sat next to me and said, “Hi, mister. Are you looking for a cheap, fantastic city tour? American? English, Spanish, German, French? Do you know English?” I put my cigarette stub in the empty water bottle I was holding, and replied “Turkish is fine. I am Turkish.” Then, he switched to Turkish and said “Sorry, brother. I thought you were a tourist. Your sunglasses, shorts, and flip-flops. Still, are you looking for a cheap city tour? We have Turkish instructions for the local tourists,
too.” I told him that I was not interested in. Besides, I did a similar city tour when I visited Istanbul in 2007 and told him that it was not really cheap. He laughed and defended himself by explaining the “changing dynamics of tourism industry in Sultanahmet,” the main touristic district of Istanbul.

“We needed to raise the price tags on everything. There used to be a lot of tourists from the West. They would come here to learn about the city. Architecture, history, and food. Some of them were not really rich. They knew that they were supposed to bargain over everything. We used to give them discount. These days, look around you, it is all Arabs. Look at all those black veils. One guy with more than one wife and a bunch of kids. They are rich. Oil money. But they are so rude. They are not civilized. They are not cultured. The western tourists were much better. Poorer but civilized. But we have to keep the business going. I can’t tell my boss that I don’t want to take the Arab groups on a tour. I know Arabic. Enough Arabic. They don’t ask so many questions. If I have difficulty in entertaining them, I just take them to a shopping mall, and they are all captivated by the lower prices.” He laughed and continued, “It is really easy to keep them busy on a tour. But I wish I had more Western customers who really come to get a sense of the East, real Turkey, the food, the culture, and the history. Not just for the shopping mall or the places where Turkish soap operas are shot. (...) [The Arab tourists] all watch those soap operas. Now, we are selling soap-opera-tours. It brings good money.” I added to the conversation, “Yeah. I heard that the Turkish soap operas are quite popular in so many places. Not only among the Arabs. I heard that they are becoming popular in Latin America, as well. It is fascinating, isn’t it?” He continued, “It is. Still, I do not understand how can the Arabs really be hooked up to the
Turkish operas. They like Kivanc Tatlitug or Beren Saat [Turkish celebrities] (...)” and joked “Horny Arabs.” After having complained about the Arabs for a little more, he, out of nowhere, added, “The Ottoman should have assimilated them all while we had the chance!” Another smile and he asked, “So are you sure? Tour?” I refused even to take a flier. He wished me a pleasant day. He finished his monologue. He poured out his troubles, made a final discount offer for his tour, and left to make some money out of the tourists he did not respect at all. He even did not give me ten more seconds to ask anything.

His last points on the Turkish soap operas reminded me an article that I procrastinated reading. It was saved somewhere on my computer. I quickly wrote down his sentences on a piece of paper and put a reminder on my phone to read the article that I did not remember the exact title of. I just typed, “Soap Opera, soft power, Turkish colonialism,” which in fact was “Soft Power or Illusion of Hegemony: The Case of the Turkish Soap Opera “Colonialism”” (Yoruk and Vatikiotis 2013).

The examples of the representation of the Other were piling up to be classified and interpreted during my deskwork. I was becoming more confident about at least one theme I was going to write about: The ambivalent relationship of Turks with their self, the West, the East, and the Other. I was not certain how to conceptualize it—I, later, decided to write it with the title ‘Discourse of Colonialism’ after re-reading Nandy’s The Intimate Enemy (1988). Having read Said’s Orientalism (1978) and highlighting his remark on the use of Orientalism by the Orientals, Kasaba’s A Moveable Empire (2009) and Kasaba’s and Bozdogan’s edited volume Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey (1997), I knew that the images I encountered could be clear examples
of “Orientalism within the Orient.” Yet, I needed to gather more information before writing.

In Malatya, a city in Eastern Turkey, I was typing heatedly at a bus station and a young man, probably in his early-twenties was looking at my laptop. He kept looking and looking. Finally, he approached and asked “Are they expensive?” I did not want to say it was cheap or expensive. Either way, I could have given some misleading information. Cheap or expensive compared to what or for whom? He did not seem to be better-off. Like the bus driver who guessed, by my clothes, that I lived abroad, I thought that young man was quite unfortunate just by looking at his outfit.

I knew that the marginal utility of the laptop was high for me so no matter how much I paid; it was cheap. But, he would not understand, I thought, the concept of marginal utility. Probably, too much information for him, I reasoned and judged in seconds. I was also hesitant to say the value of my laptop as I thought he might have been checking whether it was worth beating me and stealing my belongings. And I soliloquized, “Please. Not one of those bullies again. Please not.” He was not. Unlike the older kids that turned my life into hell while I was in elementary school, he did not attempt to steal anything.

I was glad that I did not say anything about my laptop because he told me that he was a shepherd with no “money income.” Gratitude and grievance together. He complained that his father collected his earning from the locals of his village whose livestock he herded on the mountains. In return, the father gave him shelter and food whenever that young man was not up on the mountains herding. He was also thankful for his father for looking after him. I found it sad because I was not sure who was
looking after whom. And, rewriting this story, I asked myself, ‘just’ for a second, who knows how many times similar micro-exploitations will occur in the villages that I will probably never visit, while I sit in an office room writing on international relations on a safe and well-maintained campus. I regretted for not having done anything for inequality until my thirties.

“So what is your name,” I asked. Although I asked his name just to be talking, I got to know all those details about him. He gave me the liberty of calling him with his nickname. “Çoban … (shepherd in Turkish). This is how they know me in the village.

Ask for the Çoban if you come to my village,” he started a brief (and close) friendship at the bus station. He was not interested in my name but I anyway introduced myself. I asked him if he wanted to have a cup of tea in the teahouse of the terminal and eat grilled cheese or tost (Turkish). I felt upset about his brief life story and wanted to help him somehow. He looked at the buses and accepted my offer as “The bus driver was not even around,” he explained.

We sat by the window so that he could check if the bus driver opened the doors of the bus as a sign of departure. After buying tea, he told me that he wanted to have a laptop to sign up for Facebook and some online chatting. He said, “One of my uncle’s sons met a girl from Austria. He knows a little bit German and he told me that he would help me marry a girl.” “Why don’t you marry a girl here? Someone you know the language of. Besides, what will you do in Austria?” I questioned. He smiled and added more sugar to his tea. Stirring the tea, he said, “I know I am ignorant. But I can learn. If given the opportunity, I can learn their language. In school, the elementary school, they
even did not teach us math. I hardly learned a little bit Turkish. The teachers did not care about us.”

He reminded me a Kurdish man that I met in Istanbul who complained about exactly the same problem: Learning nothing but Turkish in school. “So,” he continued, “If I can find an Austrian and move there, I will go to school. First to learn the language.” I asked, “But what will you do there? Do you have a job in mind?” He could not care less for a job. His main concern was an Austrian girl to marry and get the Austrian residency. “I have relatives there. They will find me a job at a mine or in construction. I am a hardworking man. I worked at a dam construction and applied for a job as a miner. Of course, I will work, if I go there. But the safest and easiest way to go to Austria is to marry someone. I don’t want to go illegally.”

I was not surprised with this conversation. It is quite common among youngsters of Turkey to ‘seek some sort of refugee’ in Europe through marriage. Yet, the rest of the conversation surprised and disgusted me. After the initial words of him, I noticed that I was not really interested in talking to him. I felt upset for him and I just wanted to help him with a cup of tea and a little snack that I would be too picky about on another day. Nevertheless, despite the fact that I did not have much to say, he kept talking.

“In Austria men are pussy,” he declared. I really did not like the direction of the conversation. However, it was too late. Lifting my eyebrows, I asked, “You think so?” There was an underestimation in my voice. “Right! In Europe, men are pussy!” He added. My underestimation or sarcastic tone did not discourage him. He insisted on using his sexist insult. I told him, “Okay! Go on! But please keep the swear down!” He did not seem to be paying attention to my unrest. He continued, “You know. Women in
Europe do not care what job we have or what we know. They are more interested in our manhood. They like men from Turkey. I heard from my uncle who lives in Europe that when Turkish men went to Germany to work, German women were waiting at the train station for some Ottoman men. They were expecting the grandchildren of the Ottoman. You know, they are more ‘comfortable’ than our women.”

“Women in Europe lust for Turkish man.” I heard exactly the same story from a first generation immigrant to Germany. A relative of my father’s proudly told that German women were waiting for the grandchildren of the Ottomans at a train station. Yet, my father’s relative also complained that they arrived Germany a week after a “health inspection during which they were treated as livestock.” I wanted to add the inspection part of the story to shepherd’s version and ask whether he wanted to be a male sex worker—which I see nothing wrong with—because that was what I was drawing from his words. However, I really did not want to be punched in the face by a guy who was very proud of his manhood. He was in fact a complete stranger, who was merely interested in moving to Europe via marriage (or, frankly, via his genitals). He thought he had a chance since men in Europe were in fact not “man enough” for the promiscuous European women unlike “his own women.” The entire conversation was making me quite sick and I really wanted his bus to give the signal for the departure. I asked for his excuse and told him that I need to go and get my seat on my bus. He apologized and said “forgive me if I annoyed you.” I wanted to say “Hell, yeah! But it was my mistake to invite you over tea! As you said, you literally are ignorant!” but instead, “No worries. Thanks for the chat! Have a safe travel” were my final words. Then he said, “Why don’t you give me your laptop. You can buy another one in America.”
had mentioned I lived in America at some point. I smiled and apologized with a gesture. 
He replied that he was only joking. I wore my backpack on my chest to keep an eye on 
the zippers and got my spot on the bus. He was still drinking his tea and looking at his 
bus.

The manhood the Turkish man was proud of was not really peculiar to the 
shepherd. In Istanbul, a thirty-year-old graduate student in a Northern European country 
talked about how, during his first years, his darker skin was his main identity. In his 
words, "being exotic increased his value in the dating pool" was the summary of his 
social life. "No one was interested in what I study. My being Eastern, or Middle Eastern, 
was the most interesting thing about me. At first, I was okay with it. But then I noticed 
that my exoticism was getting beyond and in front of every other aspect of me. I was not 
me. I was a Middle Easterner." During the interview, I asked him if he could tell me 
about his experiences in Europe.

"First of all," he started, "it is almost impossible to have a close friend. I was lucky 
to be invited to a friend’s family house. But that was it. We, as international students, 
had our own social circle. Once in a while a native would join us. That was it. They were 
such a closed society. What they imagined about us belongs to centuries ago. Exactly 
how we picture them. Cold, closed to others, orientalist, and prejudiced. There is no way 
to approve that you are also worth as a human being or that you are more than your 
Middle Eastern heritage. But I agreed with some of their perceptions. I mean they were 
not totally wrong. The men over there are way more feminine than men in Turkey. Not 
necessarily a bad thing. Their gender roles are certainly different from ours. But it is too 
much. (...) Also they have a point about the Middle Eastern people, especially the
Arabs. Well about the Turks, as well. The Turkish guys were so disrespectful to women, not to their own wives but to other women (…) They find flaws in regulations and laws to abuse the system. The authorities were right to think that they should have thought twice when they were dealing with a Turk or an Arab. And the image we have in Turkey that Arabs are dirty,” he laughed, “I know it sounds racist, but it is true. They certainly are dirty.” We talked about some other stereotypes and his experiences during his studies. He wrapped up that he was happy to be back in Ankara where his family resides. He said, “my soul and identities are in between the East and West, at least I, physically, am in between the East and the West when I am in Ankara.”

Similar to the shepherd and the graduate student who studied in Northern Europe, a self-described “ex-illegal-kick-boxer” had “concerns” about the femininity of the men in the West. It was December 2013. I met him at a traditional coffeehouse near the newest shopping mall of my hometown. He told me that he traveled all over Europe for an underground kick box organization. Although he had broken his nose due to his previous job, he said that he was proud of it because he believed it had widened his worldview. He told me that unlike many other people I interviewed, he probably was one of the few who had the chance to get to know the European culture and in fact lived like the Europeans. He was proud of his “European background.” “I am very tolerant,” he proudly claimed. Yet, his tolerance had one exception. He stressed that he would have not given up his traditional family norms. “A man is a man and a woman is a woman,” he told me. In Europe, for him, everyone was so feminine, and that troubled him. He believed that a society maintains its integrity as far as gender roles were preserved. “Don’t get me wrong,” he said. “I worked as a bartender in a gay bar in Marmaris. And I
do not have any problem with them. Well, as far as those marriage equality law they try to legislate in America does not spread here. It is one thing in Turkey we should stand against. Gender roles are not for nothing. They serve a purpose in the society and the West lacks it. That’s why their men are too weak. They need immigrants to fulfill the duties of hard labor.”

The day following, I interviewed an engineer. She was in her early 40s. She told me that she had been just back from Israel where she had worked briefly at a partner company. She said she usually prefers employee-exchange programs with companies in London, but she was glad to be assigned to Israel at least once. “It was mesmerizing. Jerusalem is such an amazing city. Tel Aviv is likewise. But when you are in Jerusalem you can clearly distinguish the Jewish sections of the city from the Palestinian. The Jewish parts are developed, clean, and prosperous while the other parts are full of street beggars, dirty, and clearly underdeveloped. The Arabs for sure do not care about their neighborhood. The Jews are much more modern. They are much more Western. They are more similar to Turks. The Jewish state reminded me a book in which I read that Israel was very eager and respectful in protecting the historical, especially the Ottoman era architecture. (…) But, these are not really important, I am sure you already know these. I have a story. Please write it in your article.” I corrected her, “It will be my dissertation.

She continued, “Sorry. In your dissertation. Let me tell you the story. I used to go to work early in the morning. First day, second day, and third day. Days passed. All the same. I was the only woman at work at that early hour. I wondered why all the other women were late. I guess it was my second week at work. I greeted our chief engineer
and asked why all the women, except me, were late. He laughed and clarified that they were not late. Since they were all mothers (…), he told me, they were first supposed to take care of their family and send the kids to school. Women are first of all our mothers that we need for successful new generations, he told me. Can you believe that?” Then, she asked me again, “Can you believe that?” It was a rhetorical question. Before I said a word, she ridiculed the Jews, “We say ‘Nah. Jews!’ Right?” With an underestimating voice, she proceeded, “We don’t expect anything good to come out of a Jew. But can you imagine how respectful they are to their women, to their mother, and for the future of their country. I read in a book that it was the same in the Ottoman Empire. It is not the same in the West. Well, maybe, I am too naïve in believing that Israel is so great because it lets the women prioritize their family. For example, why did not they let me go to work late? I did not have my family with me, but they did not give me same privilege, probably because I was from Turkey and a Muslim (…) You earlier asked what I think about the West and I told you civilization. But I guess I need to change it to capitalist and corrupted. If I think about it further and compare my experiences in Europe and Israel, I should definitely say the West is capitalist and corrupted. Not civilized.”

Following her modified reflection on the West, I asked her, “But you have just said that the Israelis were much more Western than the Arabs. So does that mean they were more capitalist and corrupted than the Arabs or Palestinians?” She paused for a second and replied, “I guess you are right. But you know what! When I said the Jews were more Western, I meant that they have taken the good virtues of the West such as clean urbanization, respect for others, or technological development. They obviously did
not imitate the West. This is how westernization should be. Although Israel is like the spoiled child of Europe, I believe Turkey has a lot to learn from them. Unlike us, obviously they were selective in adopting. What the Arabs or we do is simply imitating. Not learning. For example, we imitate their immoral family structure. Each and every day the young generations lose their respect for their elder. Dating is becoming such a normal thing for even high school kids that they are grown up as, you know, promiscuous generations. The divorce rate is increasing. I won’t keep you busy with my examples, but long story in short, the West can be good and bad at the same time. Turkey just imitates the bad things. Israel seems to be taking the good things. But they are Jews. Eventually, Jews. How good can they be?” She smiled and wrapped up, “Don’t ask any more questions on this. I can’t explain everything. Maybe, it is how we are all brought up, but some things you just feel or know.” I thought that it was best to conclude the interview. I did not want to be seen as an interrogator and make her bored by my questions. I had another interview scheduled on the same day. I thanked her and left.

My next interview was with a 24 years-old college student. Her major was Education and she was in the process of applying to graduate programs. We first talked about whether it was a good idea to start a graduate program or not. Her main purpose was to become an academic and specialize in education of children with special needs. She told me that if she could find a job at a university, she could pursue a career and have a proper family life. She wished that her English was enough to apply to a program in America, but she, unfortunately, could not have passed the English proficiency tests. She wondered how she could improve her English. I cut my advice short because I was
more interested in my research. I read the IRB consent form and started with free association.

The West, for her, meant ‘the civilization,’ prosperity, and human rights. She was not hesitant in adding, “The West is where Turkey tries to belong to. It is, in fact, the EU. But it will never happen.” “How about the East?” I asked. She thought for a little while. Then, she juxtaposed “true religion, potential, mess, turmoil, colonized, canine, and unfortunately where Turkey is thought to belong to.” I asked her what she meant by true religion and her answer was “Islam.” She added that she prays five times a day while she chooses not to wear a headscarf. She identified as a “modern and secular Muslim.” Then, I asked, “Do you think Turkey belongs to the East?” Her response was a straight no and she hoped that Turkey would never belong to the East. Things were getting confusing. The West Turkey will never belong to and the East Turkey should never be a part of. What else? She must have sensed that I was at a deadlock in comprehending. She continued without any questions from the interviewer. “We are a Muslim country with Western principles and norms. After the foundation of the Republic, we turned our back to the East. It was necessary and the right thing to do. The Arabs fought against the Ottoman. They were no different than the Christians or the Armenians of the time. (…) Forget about the disloyal East. The West had the technology, the power, and laws. Thanks to the reformations, we were able to bring up a new generation with culture. I believe if things went as planned, Turkey was going to be a perfect synthesis between the East and the West. A true Western state with Islam, true Islam.” I asked, “What went wrong?” She seemed to be surprised by my question. Then, it turned out that it was not my question; it was my “ignorance” that surprised her.
"Everybody knows it. It is twofold. On the one hand, our obsession with the Ottoman legacy and second it is the West that is scared of that legacy. No matter what we do, we cannot deny that we are founded on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. There are of course good things we should have kept alive. Yet, it is past. Past is where the past belongs. The more we insist on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the more we prove the Western perception that we are not one of them. They believe that we are Easterners. The Middle East is where we belong to and we keep trying to show otherwise. The Islamists and bigotry in this country has a huge role in this. We should advertise that ‘yes we are Muslim but not like other Muslim countries in the Middle East.’ We should say, ‘yes, we are the grandchildren of the Ottoman which was a great civilization and which introduced the civilization to the Middle East and even to Europe, but now we are Turkey! With the same potential.’ We can truly be the bridge between them. Yet, right now, we are like the Mehter Takimi [Ottoman Military Band], two steps further and one step back. Even worse than that, sometimes two steps back, one step further. (…)’ She smiled.

“You know what,” she maintained, “Sometimes, when I watch the news, I feel like Turkey is like a child dropped at the yard of a Mosque. The baby cries and cries… No one dares to adopt it. I told that maybe we are not dropped at the yard of a Mosque but at the doorstep of a church! She replied, “a Church? I guess we can say that. A Muslim kid left alone at the doorstep of a church and that is why the kid is never welcomed in. Just because it is Muslim.” “(…) What I understood from your thoughts is that you believe that Turkey or Turks are in general alone. Neither Western nor Eastern. And I can’t think of any other alternative to get out of this binary. So a broader society the
Turks belong to does not exist. Turks belong only to Turks. I mean no any other umbrella that we gather under with other societies, which means that rest of the world is Turks’ Other. Is this what you think?” I asked. I was expecting her to give a direct yes or no. In fact, I was expecting her to say “Yes.” Instead, she told me that it was totally another topic we could discuss for hours.

“But let me briefly summarize how complicated it is,” she said. “First of all, are you Kurdish or Alevite?” she asked. “Neither. I was brought up as a Muslim, a Sunni Muslim. But I don’t practice any religion, while I believe my ethics are highly influenced by the teachings of Islam,” I replied. “Are you atheists? Never mind. It does not matter. I just didn’t want to offend you by any means,” she clarified. “Anyways,” she continued, “There is no ‘Us’ in Turkey. There are plenty of ‘Us.’ That is our weakness. That is why we cannot unite against the external powers. Kurds and Alevites—and many other internal enemies—are always looking for a weakness of the state. They know the West will always provide them with the necessary means to keep their secessionist ideals alive. That is one thing. We have the ‘White Turks’ who believe that they are the superiors. We are all the same. They look like you or me. But they think they are much greater than the rest of the country. They have money and are well educated. They believe they are the only true Westerners in this land. They get the advantage of the system. They are taking advantage of the regime. They are the ones who go to cultural activities such as concerts. A whole different world in Turkey. We have the urban and rural division. Veiled woman versus modern woman. And this is the second thing. And I believe these are all because we insist on denying our past while there are things to be embraced. I repeat myself, past is where past belongs to, but there is no need to be
ashamed of it. Once we ruled the world, why be the ‘sick man’ of Europe now. Why insist on become a member of a union that we are not even welcomed? We are degrading ourselves by even letting the Europeans act as if Turkey is a stray country!”

The ‘bastard of the World,’ the ‘bastard of the West,’ and stuck in between the East and the West. Did these people have Homi K. Bhabha in mind when they used ‘the bastard?’ When they were talking about ‘the White Turk with darker skin,’ did they refer to Frantz Fanon? I do not think so. It was too much of a terminology or ‘professional’ literature for them, for ‘the ordinary.’ I believed that none of them had any idea about these authors. Perhaps, I was a ‘white’ or ‘whiter’ Turk when I abstained from ‘complicating’ our conversations by introducing the ideas of these authors into our conversations. I still believe the literature guided my interpretation was not a concern for those people. Yet, it is essential in my interpretation of my own experience and the information/stories I recorded.

**Colonial Discourse and the Occidental Orientalists**

Right at the end of my dissertation prospectus defense, Dr. Aida Hozic, one of my committee members, advised that I should have read Ashis Nandy’s *The Intimate Enemy* once again, paying more attention. I noted it in my notebook. I did not read it right away. I took a few days off to celebrate the elevation of my status from a grad student to a Ph.D. candidate. Such ‘status changes’ have some impact on how you are perceived within the hierarchy among fellow graduate students. Anyways, I was really good at procrastinating and noticed that I needed to re-read that book right before I left for my fieldwork in November 2013. I packed the book among many other books in my carry-on and started reading it on the plane on my way to the field, to ‘my home.’
When I first read it, I was looking for an example of (lack of) the weaker parties in the literature. Nandy’s book was a clear illustration of the ‘role of the colonized’ in the maintenance of the discourse of colonialism. Yet, the book was more than that. The core of the book I hastily ignored—because I was reading the book for a different purpose—was in fact pointing out a trend I was already becoming aware of. The tension or the hierarchy between femininity and the masculinity, ambivalence of identities, and other dynamics of the colonial discourse were talking to me. They, I thought, were exactly what I had been collecting in the field. It turned out, they were not ‘exactly’ the same but they were clear guidelines through which I could have made meaning out of my stories.

The interaction between the doctor and the old lady I kept remembering for many years have always disturbed. It was the clash between two faces of Turkey: the traditional and the modern. It was an (dis)order between the two faces of the society I was born into, a clash between so many co-existing—not necessarily peaceful—identities: Modern versus traditional, religious versus secular, educated versus illiterate, ‘white Turk’ versus ‘the simple Turk,’ cultured versus uncivilized, the Ottoman versus the Republic, hair versus headscarf, mind versus mind… As an IR student I was mostly interested in the hierarchy in the international system among states. Although I was involved in different forms of hierarchies at different levels of the social ladder, I was not really keen on questioning those due to my partially apolitical nature—a family inheritance. Yet, reading The Intimate Enemy, I noticed these tensions including the brief anecdote of the doctor and the old lady were all different forms confrontations that I had been mostly indifferent to.
Although Turkish society does not have a history of a direct rule of an external power similar to other obvious examples of colonialism such as India, the discourse I identified as one of the main trends of representation of the Other resembles what Nandy pictures in his *The Intimate Enemy*. “Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through its military and technological prowess as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order” (1988, ix). The Turkish society is a scene where various hierarchies of othering are deeply rooted. These hierarchies about the Self and the Other both within and outside the country are usually in the form of attributes such as childhood, ambiguity of belonging, masculinity, femininity, modern or historical.

Writing on India, Nandy points out that especially in the aftermath of the Second World War “it has become obvious that the drive for mastery over men is not merely a by-product of a faulty political economy but also of a world view which believes in the absolute superiority of the human over the nonhuman and the subhuman, the masculine over the feminine, the adult over the child, the historical over ahistorical, and the modern or progressive over the traditional” (1988, x). These sets of binaries of superior-inferior, Ashis Nandy argues, do not only dominates limited geographical spaces because the West overpowers the minds as psychological categories (1988, xi). Therefore, “the West is now everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds” (1988, xi). This, I believe, is the case of the ordinary Turks with an exceptional difference. The West is everywhere, yet sometimes nowhere.

The exemplary interviews I shared clearly indicate the dominance of the West as a category that people explain their identities accordingly. However, the West is not only
the categorical imperative that people use as a reference point. The Other of the West, the East, is also a category people make sense accordingly. This is where my notion of “Orientalism within the Orient” connects to the picture. Similar to the Indians “who did not always correct the Orientalists,” (1988, xv), my interlocutors sometimes perpetuated the images of the Orientalists. They, to an extent, seem to have “tried to create an alternative language of discourse” (1988, xvii) of in-betweenness, ambivalence, belonging and exclusion. Most of them seem to have “chosen their alternative within the West by judging the given evidence through which they rejected some attributes of the West while adopting some others” (1988, xiv).

Having read Nandy over and over, I found myself asking, “Are Turks like Rudyard Kipling, an Anglo-Indian author, through whom Nandy explains the impact of colonialism on Indians and the British?” Above anything else or the details of the psychoanalysis of Kipling’s life, I highlighted the following, “Kipling’s dilemma can be stated simply: he could not be both Western and Indian; he could be either Western or Indian” (1988, 71). This was the summary of the colonized body and soul that I found depressing. It was the summary of the life “two Kiplings: (…) the hero loyal to Western civilization and the Indianized Westerner who hated the West within him, (…) the hero who interfaced cultures and the anti-hero who despised cultural hybridity and bemoaned the unclear sense of self in him” (1988, 68). It was the summary of “an internal human reality, in love as well as in hate, in identification as well as in counter-identification” with the colonizer (1988, 87).

I thought I was interacting with Turkish Kiplings when our conversation was about the West—hence, inescapably, about the East. Most of them felt that they could not
belong to both the West and the East; they could have been either the Westerner or the Easterner.

As a research strategy, I left the West and East to be defined in the field. I was expecting people to identify around two separate points: either East or West. Thinking about my research design or pre-field work, I later noticed that I considered the East and West as separate two points of identification. I even did not think about a straight line on which different degrees of being Western or Eastern could be located. The ordinary, I might have (un)consciously thought, was not ‘intellectual’ or ‘sophisticated’ enough to understand the affiliations on a continuous line. I was fair enough to allow them to define the meanings of two separate affiliation points. Yet, I guess, I underestimated them like the other scholars I criticized for undervaluing the ‘power’ or importance of the ordinary people. My pre-design that left no room for a continuity of affiliations between the East and the West was not rootless.

Medrea, whom I read upon returning from the field, reminded me once again that “we can imagine the huge impact [colonialism] had not only on economic, political and social spheres, but also on the world of imagination, which was inevitably engaged in promoting the colonial beliefs and ideas” (2008, 255). However, most importantly, the author, by comparing various scholars discussing colonial power and discourse, made me notice the impact Said’s pioneering book Orientalism had on me. The author (2008, 257) emphasizes Said’s following point, “… the colonial discourse was an artificially made discourse with a hegemonic character by which the East is produced as the West’s inferior “Other” thus strengthening the West’s self image as a superior civilization. How was this made possible? Through a “dichotomizing system of
"representations" that resorted to stereotypes, which viewed the East as voiceless, sensual, female, despotic, irrational, backward while the West was masculine, democratic, rational, moral, dynamic and progressive" (Said 1978, 12). I took *Orientalism* from my bookshelf and went over the pages again. Like Medrea, I noticed that I had highlighted the same pages and wrote the following on the margins: “West versus East,” “dualist vision of world,” “dichotomy of IDs,” and “where are the Turks? On which side?”

Said’s explanation of the hegemonic colonial discourse or Orientalism mostly relies on the dichotomy of the West and the East, the former of which is the powerful and dominating. Still. Said warns, at the end of his book, about the use of Orientalist sentiments by the Orientals themselves (1978, 322). In other words, he is pointing out the possibility of “Orientalism within the Orient.” He accepts the presence of Oriental Orientalists. Yet, he seems to ignore or underestimate the “Occidental Orientalists” that, I believe, portrays the representation of the West and the East the ordinary Turks harbor. They are occidentalist in the sense that they have their stereotypical images of the West and they are Orientalist that they carry images Edward Said explains as the core of Orientalism. Moreover, they paradoxically try to combine being both Westerner and Easterner while being neither of them wholly.

Said’s dichotomy falls short of understanding the spectrum the two poles form among the ordinary Turks. The ordinary Turks I met were to an extent in self-denial. They were rejecting being members of the East, while they were accepting to be the East of the West. I remembered Fanon’s (2004) *Wretched of the Earth* in which he argues that colonialism’s systematic denigration of the colonized person and the
continuous denial of the colonized person’s humanity often leads to self-doubt, identity confusion, or feelings of inferiority among the colonized. Yet, still his account, I thought, left no room for the juxtaposition of the colonized and the colonial in a Self. My research for trying to understand the hybridity that I thought what explains the Turkish representation of the West and the East led me, to Bhabha whom Medrea (2008) also considers as challenging Edward Said’s dichotomy of the East and the West.

Contrary to the explanation that colonial discourse creates obvious demarcations, Bhabha argues that rather than a precise exclusion or opposition of the Self and the Other, the colonial discourse results in hybrid identities ([1994] 2005). Colonial discourse is a form of discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its imitation or its mirror image ([1994] 2005, 159). Unlike Edward Said, Homi Bhabha argues that the line between the colonizer and the colonized can be blurry in the sense that although the colonized is constituted by the master discourse, the colonized self innovatively displays itself in different form of hybridization and localized forms of the colonizers ([1994] 2005). Reading these arguments, hybridity did not sound strange or foreign to me. I thought, nor would it to my interlocutors. They already had a sense of hybridity or ‘being the bastard of the West.’ Yet, I was still not sure how hybridity could be conceptualized or how colonial discourse really lead to the sense of hybridity.

Homi Bhabha explains:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal. Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and
displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettled the mimetic or narcissistic demand of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial the hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory—or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency. If discriminatory effects enable the authorities to keep an eye on them, their proliferating difference evades that eye, escapes that surveillance. Those discriminated against may be instantly recognized, but they also force a re-cognition of the immediacy and articulacy of authority—a disturbing effect that is familiar in the repeated hesitancy afflicting the colonialist discourse when contemplates its discriminated subjects: the inscrutability of the Chinese, the unspeakable rites of the Indians, the indescribable habits of the Hottentots. It is not the voice of authority is at a loss for words. It is, rather, that the colonial discourse has reached that point, when faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what rules of recognition assert (1985, 154).

Some might argue that this explanation sound like an extreme scenario for the Turkish society. However, once we consider that colonialism is now everywhere as Nandy reminds us and the formation of the Turkish society is considered—as I discuss later—it is not unfair, at least, to consider the relationship between colonial discourse and the representation of the West and the East. Talking about a causality between the colonial discourse and the Turkish representation of the Other may, in fact, be too ambitious and against the nature of my study. Hence, I should re-state that the similarities or the parallel notions both in (post)colonial discourse and the Turkish representation of the Other is undeniable.

As in my story at the beginning of this chapter, there is a constant denial in Turkish society. It is a denial of not a single identity but a variety of identities. Yet,
particular, among a certain sector of the Turkish society, there is the denial of the traditional, the historical, or at least the 'not-modern.' This discrimination is a permanent struggle of owning and disowning. It is an exclusion and inclusion of the blurry with a few clearly marked boundaries, if there is any at all. It is a constant ‘fight’ or rage. What is excluded and what is owned are entangled. This is exactly what hybridity is about.

Ashis Nandy clarifies

...The colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures which can then be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism. Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other “denied” knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition. Again, it must be stressed, it is not simply the content of disavowed knowledges—be they forms of cultural Otherness or tradition of colonialist treachery—that return to be acknowledged as counter authorities. … What is irremediably estranging in the presence of the hybrid—in the revaluation of the symbol of national authority as the sign of colonial difference—is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation: they are simply there to be seen or appropriated (Bhabha 1985, 156).

Denied knowledges! I highlighted it. Wrote it on the margins of my copy. Writing this quotation took me back the early stages of my research. I recognized that I, to an extent, have been trying to understand the denied knowledges that I, as a member of a certain majority, have been denying for so many years. And I acknowledged that, I, perhaps, would continue denying many other sets of knowledges because it is part of being a ‘subject.’ Still, I tried to comprehend how much I have denied or how much of my own knowledge has been denied.
On January 16, 2015, I woke up a little bit later than I usually do. It was around 10.30 in the morning. Without leaving my bed, I reached my phone to check my e-mails. There was no e-mail with an attention-getting subject such as “last day for submitting,” “your visa expires soon,” or “(…) accepted.” One e-mail from my advisor, Dr. Ido Oren (2015) was a good way to start the day. The subject was “Neolokal Istanbul.” And it was about food, one of my favorite topics:

Nail, I know you can’t read the article, in Hebrew, but, fyi, the restaurant critic of Haaretz did not like this Istanbul fancy restaurant. Apparently the chef is on a mission to save fast disappearing traditional ingredients (like a special, rare kind of Tulum cheese) and prepare them with modern cooking techniques. The critic thought there’s probably a good reason these ingredients are disappearing.

Ido
(…) 
http://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/recipes/restaurants-reviews/.premium-1.2538902

I read the e-mail and stayed in bed for a little bit more since it did not require any immediate action. Later, I replied with some extra detail about the cheese—the topic of the restaurant review Dr. Oren had shared—and the traditional way of making it. After a couple of other brief correspondences about the critique, Dr. Oren and I never wrote back about the same topic. However, there was something about the first e-mail. There was something that I kept thinking about.

Five days after the first e-mail, I came home from jogging. I was going to watch a movie and have a glass of wine. I directly went to the kitchen, sliced some cheese and opened a bottle of wine. I took my glass and the cheese plate to my desk to browse for a movie to watch while sipping my wine. Turning on my laptop, I totally forgot about the movie, and noticed that what was really keeping me busy about the correspondence on
the restaurant review was author’s idea that there could be a good reason why some ingredients were disappearing. It must have been the taste of the cheese on my plate. It reminded me the cheese the restaurant critique wrote about.

I asked myself, “By acknowledging different ways of meaning making among the ordinary Turks, am I trying to save what needs to disappear? Am I trying to find a solace in encouraging the presence of different knowledges some of which I gave up in my transition from a child to an adult or from an adult to a political scientist?” My hybridity was not only between the East and the West or modern and traditional. I voluntarily gave up various sets of knowledges or stories, which I called “stupid” or totally ignored the presence of. And some of them, I still refuse to reveal! I was brought up with some of them. Yet, I, later, never acknowledged them. I let them disappear. I gave up giving credit to them because they were irrational, stupid, far from my imagination, or outside my scientific world. Still, I do not think that I would give credit to some of them in my life. However, I wonder how they had shaped my “imagination” or under what circumstances I will keep remembering them as alternative worlds throughout my personal and professional life. On what basis will I form my denial of them? To what extent or how my life will colonize them?

My grandmother, who had suffered from Alzheimer for so many years, had a strong belief in extraterrestrial creatures. Jinn, she told her grandkids, were real and human beings and they share the same planet. In fact, she believed, as the Quran, which she could not read, taught her, that Jinn were created before the human kind and expelled from the Heaven. Therefore, for my grandmother, we, as human beings, had to be respectful to Earth as it first belonged to Jinn. We were simply intruders. Her world
was not beyond the borders of our hometown, especially the village she was born and lived. Many other villages, where the non-Muslim minorities mostly resided until the early years of the Turkish republic, surrounded the village she was from. Imagine a village on top of a hill and the plane surrounding it is home to a few villages where the churches and the mosques stand side by side, where Muslims and non-Muslims lived together. For my grandmother, the world of the Jinn was not any different than the world of the human beings.

There were Muslim and non-Muslim—or in her words “faithful and infidel”—Jinn. The faithful helped her wake up early in the morning every single day for the Morning Prayer. The infidel, on the other hand, was like George W. Bush whom she one day pointed out on her old television. The infidel Jinn and George W. Bush had a lot in common according to her. The latter, unlike the Muslim Jinn, was on a mission of keeping my grandmother asleep so that she could not pray in the morning. They were keeping her mind busy with countless distractions so that she would forget to pray holding her *tesbih* (ascription or a rosary except the cross). George W. Bush was exactly the same for her. Having initiated a war right in the middle of the Muslim world, his intention was more than fighting against a dictator who massacred ‘Other’ Muslims, my grandmother believed. She told us that he wanted to keep Muslims away from their Mosques. And worse than that he, she explained, “he was like the infidel Jinn whose next step after the Gulf war was to invade the Muslim land, take it back from the Turks, and give it back to the infidels who once had churches in our ‘own home town.’

I never shared my grandmother’s stories. This scientifically improvable extraterrestrial creatures and their mission against the Muslims was fun to listen to as a
child. Later, they became a little bit embarrassing to share with friends. A grandmother who believed in Jinn and was hostile to non-Muslims or minorities who used to live in ‘our hometown’ could have created a bad image for myself—last thing I would have wanted in blending in and get rid of my already traditional Anatolian image during my college life. I was struggling to take the Islamist or conservative Muslim image off myself for so many years. How could I share her stories while I was pro-co-existence of all religions, ethnicities, identities, or simply all human beings—not the superstitious ones, I had no room for them on earth. There is no denial that her stories had an impact on me. At least, the division of the world into Muslim and non-Muslim was among my childhood realities. But later, they became my denied knowledges.

In denying my grandmother’s stories, I believe, the change or the impact is only on me. It does not affect other lives. I do not see any wrong in my denial. Yet, I was angry with the critic who believed that there was a good reason that some ingredients were disappearing. He suggests that “people give up some of the traditional.” Like the doctor, he tells the people what to do, with their food, with their own taste. His intention might be far from the serious tone I got the feeling of. It might be the memories I had already written for this chapter that made me think that the critique sounded like the doctor who thought that she was the boss of the people. Yet, it is the story of the Turkish hybridity. A story people had written by voluntary and forced denial of some of their past or some of the traditions. It is the story that had created a continuous ambivalence in the identity market.

This continuity of ambivalence is partially what the colonial discourse is about. It is what keeps the productive power of the colonial discourse alive. “For it is the force of
ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency; ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed. Yet, the function of ambivalence as one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power … remains to charted” (Bhabha 1983, 18).

While I was in the field, one of the first components of the trend of representation of the Other was the feeling or the idea of being neither Westerner nor Easterner while being both Westerner and Easterner. The feeling of being “the bastard of the West” was quite common. Being cultured was associated with the West. ‘The Eastern society’ or the East as a category was usually pictured as the category that Turks were “unfortunately” classified under. Occidentalism and Orientalism co-exist both of which can be argued to be equally strong components of this particular trend of representation of the Other. Moreover, the denial of the aspects of the Self that are shown to be inferior by the Western discourse is apparent. Considering the Turks as the inferior of the West, Turks incline to adopt a language of the victim. At the same time, they believe to be the superior of the East. They consider themselves as the one who should teach the East the “truth” while the East is the land of the “true religion.” The belief in the superiority of the West and the Western culture as the ultimate goal to achieve, and the denial of certain aspects of the Self in line with the Orientalist assumptions resemble the discourse of colonialism. Finally, among the ordinary Turks, the hierarchy between masculine and feminine, modern and traditional, childhood and adulthood, and present
and past is absolutely parallel to what other scholars describe as discourse of colonialism.

Going through my field notes again, transcending between my own past and present, and thinking over my own denied knowledges, I kept asking how colonial discourse and the representation of the Other among the Ordinary Turks can be associated? How can I, if I can at all, conceptualize their perception of the East and the West to my priori knowledge or frame analysis?

**From the Doorstep of an Apartment to a Library in Florida**

In the 2015 annual convention of International Studies Association, I presented an earlier version of this chapter. My paper, which was more of an outline, was assigned to a panel titled “Postcolonial Perspectives on The Middle East Across History.” In another panel my “non-academic” writing style was praised as fun to read and I was encouraged to use more survey data or positivist studies to strengthen my arguments. Having been concerned with the relevance of my papers, I started my presentation in the “Postcolonial Perspectives” panel by indicating that unlike other papers in the panel, I did not seek to decolonize any structure. Still, I added that my paper was already about decolonizing the methodology and methods of IR. Additionally, at the end of my presentation, as a defense, I raised the following question, “I still ask, how are Turkey and colonial discourse relevant?” My question was the main concern of our discussant. Although I do not hypothesize causality between colonialism and representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks, I argue that these two are relevant. Yet, how? How can a country or a society that does not have a history of colonialism compared to, for instance, India, be related to colonialism? To answer this, I
believe, describing a general picture of what colonial discourse or colonial culture is and the development of “modern Turkish society” should suffice.

Before anything else, I wanted to clarify, for my own understanding, what classical model of colonialism would look like. I remembered a couple of papers and critiques I had written. I found them on my external hard drive. Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* had been my guidance earlier in understanding how colonialism developed. Although partial, his explanation was still meaningful when I tried to make sense of the Turkish representation of the Other. For Fanon, colonialism proceeds in four main steps: 1) Forced entry of a colonizing power in a territory; 2) Construction of a society with ‘newly introduced’ or imposed cultural principles, cultural fragmentation, and cultural reformation of the indigenous; 3) production and enforcement of the division of the superior colonizer and inferior native; 4) Creation of a segregated society—mostly based on race—whose institutions are designed for the benefit of the superior or the colonizer (2004).

Forced entry in a territory, segregation of the society or cultural fragmentation might be considered inapplicable in understanding the formation of the current Turkish society and their perception of the West and the East. This is a model Fanon sees appropriate for the classical cases of colonialism. Still, this does not mean that we can argue for the effects of colonialism (of minds), which is now everywhere as Nandy (1988, xi) argues. Moreover, Fanon (2004) argues that there are various means and practices ranging from military rule to re-writing of history through which minds are colonized or hegemonic colonial rule is established.
At the beginning of his book, Nandy describes how culture of colonialism works which I consider as a general framework in understanding how colonialism can have impact on the individual lives. The culture of colonialism, first “includes codes which both the rulers and the ruled can share. The main function of these codes is to alter the original cultural priorities on both sides and bring to the centre of the colonial culture subcultures previously recessive or subordinate in the two confronting cultures…Second, the culture of colonialism presumes a particular style of managing dissent (1988, 2-3). Nandy indicates one more point—which I believe is the most important—that “obviously, a colonial system perpetuates itself by including the colonized, through socio-economic and psychological rewards and punishments, to accept new social norms and cognitive categories” (1988, 2-3). For the Turkish case I do not think that there are any rigid categories except the West and the East, the modern and traditional, or similarly vaguely defined dichotomies. However, I believe that socio-economic and psychological rewards and punishments are relevant to the maintenance of the colonial discourse and Orientalism within the Orient, in Turkey. They are rewards and punishments introduced in the Turkish society through the highly regulating and controlling institutions of the state designed by the ideological fathers of the country.

Fanon (2004) argues that colonialism’s condemnation of the indigenous people and the continuous emphasis of their inferiority results in self-doubt, confusion, and acceptance of the colonial understanding of the good and bad. Parallel to Fanon’s argument, Freire (1970) argues that due to the inferior meanings attached to the colonized culture or identity, supposedly-inferior people might perpetuate the
stereotypes and try to escape from their own native cultures and identities with the hope of becoming like the superior. Fanon (1967, 10) summarizes this situation, “However, painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white.” To paraphrase it, for the colonial minds, there might be only one destiny, and it is the way of the colonizer or the superior. Although the ordinary Turks I met during my fieldwork reported rather unfavorable attitudes towards the West, there seemed to be the ‘reality’ among them that Turkey or the Turkish society had one and only one destiny, which was to become “like” the West as much as possible, if not become a member of the West.

Turks clearly have a love and hate relationship with the West or Europe (Morozov and Rumelili 2012). Although America was sometimes related as the center of the West during the free associations, the core of the West was mostly reported as Europe. And as obvious as this, there is the tendency of comparing the self with respect to the White man or the White Turk. This is what my personal experience and fieldwork indicate. Yet, not sure how far I could carry this argument, I needed to advance my research particularly on my haunting doubt on how relevant colonial discourse and Turkish representation of the Other could be.

I had read bits and pieces on the ‘colonial nature’ of the Turkish state. I had talked to my various friends who were ‘sensitive’ on the Armenian history, the minority rights, and the assimilation policies of the Turkish republic. Yet, I had never thought in depth on the repressive characteristics of the Turkish republic—or of a particular segment of the Turkish society—until I met two fellow graduate students, who jokingly accused me off being “apolitical” or state-centric so many times.
In 2007, I moved to Istanbul from Ankara to start a Master program in International Relations at Koc University. For two years, I lived in a university-subsidized apartment with three other graduate students. My housemates’ major was Comparative Historical Sociology. I heard about that program when my undergraduate advisor mentioned it as “the new trendy field promising to contribute to IR.” However, I was too traditional and chose to pursue my career strictly in IR programs. Their approach to the social world was different from mine. Their readings were a different world. For instance, Charles Tilly was their H. Morgenthau or K. Waltz. One of them was interested in late Ottoman History and early Republican era. His particular research was on the fate of the Armenian property in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey for supporting the idea that “Armenian Genocide was real.” My other roommate was interested in the popularly called “Kurdish issue” and writing a Master thesis arguing that the Kurdish issue in Turkey was in fact a civil movement—I apologize, if I have just done any injustice in describing their work. These topics were too “political” for me. I had never met people whom I called “partisans”—as a joke. Those teasing and jokes were the glue that kept us very close. More importantly, I later notice, those jokes we made about each other became our little confessions of our broader identities that we were socialized into and the stereotypes we inherited. Let me share one of my vivid memories.

One day after school, my friends and I were back to our apartment. The ride on the service bus was not very pleasant. We were all exhausted and worried for the approaching end of the semester. We were standing in front of the door of our apartment. While I was hastily searching for the keys, my friend complained: “Why do
you keep locking both of the locks? No one will break into our apartment! Don’t be a security freak! Sissy!” I found the keys and replied, “If you were in my hometown, someone else’s response would be “Didn’t you hear that Kurds moved into this neighborhood?” You know. You guys are thought to be thieves” But I guess, I am a security-freak!” My friend laughed and told me, “I like you so much. That’s why I am not punching you on the face right now!” Being a Kurd, he taught me a lot about the Eastern parts of Turkey, where he was from. He told me so many stories about the war that I was only a by-stander far from grasping the reality of the violence and its impact on individuals living not-so-far from my hometown—at least geographically.

We entered the apartment and every body minded their own business. I lied on my bed and felt a sudden guilt. How silly and politically incorrect my joke was! I really did not mean it. Still, I was embarrassed and needed to apologize. I got up and went to the living room. My friend was rolling a cigarette. “Hey, I am sorry for what I said at the door. You know I don’t mean it, right? I mean that is unfortunately the sick reality that so many people believe in my hometown. Apologies. I really did not mean it.” He laughed and assured me, “Of course I know you do not mean it. No matter how white Turk you are, I know you. We are living here together. We are like brothers. And in fact, I am so glad that you bring up such things. I like the way you incorporate them in life without meaning them. It helps all of us question all the bullshit.” I was relieved. I stood up to go to my room. Right before I left the living room, he added one more teasing to our day, “I am so glad that you accept the presence of Kurds, at least. Your assimilation did not work. Colonialism and cultural assimilation in the East failed! You Turks failed” and he laughed.
It was one of the few times I thought about the reflections of colonialism and assimilation in Turkey. It was a form of cultural assimilation of the minorities through denying their identities or different life styles. I was a part of that denial. I still believe that I was not as cruel as many other individuals. Yet, there were, perhaps still are, parts of me who perpetuated the denial of the equality of the Others of the land I was born in.

Denial could be as simple as my forgetting my grandmother’s stories. It could also be as complex as (un)conscious denial of the equality of the other languages, clothes, or ways of living. Our denial can transcend our individual dimensions of time and space, and because what we deny is another person’s life, its impact can be more serious than the denial of our childhood memories. I reasoned like that while trying to comprehend what my interlocutors told me in the field. I thought the structure people were in was like an ‘identity market:’ highly regulated, some products are subsidized by the state, older products should be replaced by the most efficient and updated versions, and some people need to go through a total make-over as their credit scores are not even enough to join the market. Still, my thoughts were in the air. I needed to understand the dynamics further with the help of the scholarly world that I had much delayed exploring since my colleague or housemate reminded me of my role in the denial of the Kurdish identity in Turkey.

Going back and forth in between the assimilation of the Kurds (or other ‘alternative’ identities in Turkey) and the deadlock concerning Turks’ being Western or Eastern, I had two roadmaps on mind. The first one was to investigate the internal colonialism, which I was not really fond of doing research about, and the second one
was the external assimilation or colonialism of the traditional Turkish life—whatever ‘the traditional Turkish life’ meant. For the latter, I initially thought it was ‘external.’ However, it also turned out to be, to an extent, internal, and supported my idea of orientalism within the orient or the occidental orientalists.

When I started my research with the key words ‘Turkey’ and ‘colonialism,’ the Kurdish issue was the first that appeared on the screen of my computer, library databases, and in the words of my colleagues that I discussed my research with. Next, the state formation, founding ideology of the leading figures of the late Ottoman period and the Republican era, and the European Union dominated the topics of studies.

First, I came across books and articles similar to the works I discussed in my chapter “Is a Turk’s only Friend Another Turk?” They were studies explaining the identity structure of Turkey through macro policies and the ideological environment today’s Turkey was founded on. At first, I skipped those studies. I had already anticipated such explanations relying on my research on the notion of Paranoid Turk. Explaining the current situation in Turkey by the macro level policies, I thought, was a cliche—a cliche I partly agreed with. Then, I downloaded, “The White Turkish Man’s Burden:” Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey,” by Zeydanlioglu (2008). I did not borrow the book the chapter is a section of. I downloaded a copy the author shared on his personal webpage. The title was catchy. It had two phrases that really took my attention: “The White Turkish Man” and “Orientalism.”

In the chapter, Zeydanlioglu discusses “the connection between Orientalism and Kemalism within the framework of the Turkish-nation-building project, in which a Westernized elite exalted homogenous nation-state-hood as the criteria for “Western-
ness.” (2008, 155). The author starts his discussion with an analysis of Said’s *Orientalism*. Zeydanlioglu, referring to Fox (1992), argues that Said’s concept of Orientalism does not account for the potential for Orientals themselves to use Orientalism in their self-definition (2008, 156). Moreover, the author cites Carrier (1995) in arguing that Orientalism serves “not just to draw a line between societies, but also to draw a line within” and “this process is likely to be particularly pronounced in societies that self-consciously stand on the border between the occident and the orient” (Zeydanlioglu 2008, 156). I really enjoyed the way the article started. I thought I had just downloaded a study that was going to clarify the cloud of ideas with the help a plainly articulated argument and review of the literature that I was not really an expert of. Moreover, the author was indicating the necessity of examining more localized formations of Orientalist discourses within nation-states which was his article about and which I believe I explicate at to achieve in this chapter (2008, 156). Yet, the nuance between my chapter and his chapter is that his focus is on the impact of nationalism, whose avatar is Orientalism he argues (2008, 157), on the Kurds of Turkey while my focus is also on the impact of Orientalism, which can be considered as the avatar of colonialism, on people that comes from a broader spectrum of society or who are “less minor” than the Kurds in Turkey.

Zeydanlioglu’s description of how orientalism advanced in Turkey was noteworthy. Under the subtitle “Orientalism and the Kemalist Civilizing Mission,” he describes, “The process of the reproduction of Orientalism within Turkey refers to the way in which the Turkish nationalist elite, the Kemalists, imagined the Turkish nation and construed the ethno-religiously diverse society inherited from the Ottoman Empire.
It is the process whereby Kemalism approached the society it emerged from, and the conditions that gave rise to it, through an Orientalist and Eurocentric reasoning and logic” (2008, 158 emphasis original). The author writes that “…in the absence of the direct Western colonialism, the Kemalist took on what I call the “White Turkish Man’s Burden” in order to carry out a civilizing mission on a supposedly backward and traditional Anatolian society enslaved by the retrograde influence of Islam” (2008, 158).

My initial thought about the article was accurate. I started to get answers to my questions such as “Is colonialism really related to Turkey?” I noted down: “The direct presence of the colonial West might be absent, but colonialism of minds and the traditional [in Turkey] is PRESENT. No worries for the direction of the chapter!!” Besides the literature for further research, on a piece of paper, I noted down the following words of the author who refers to Heper (1985) and Delaney (1995):

The essentialization and homogenization of “the West” normalized unequal power relations within Turkey, reflecting the pragmatic interests, expectations and the dominance of the secular Westernized elite, giving way to a “cognitive dissonance” between the value system of the elites and the rest of the populations … the civilizational divide between the modernizing urban elite and the subaltern rural population assigned a paternal role to the Kemalists, who constantly perceived the Anatolian masses as backward, primitive and infantilized Others. It is therefore not surprising that the state is imagined in Turkey through the familiar and familial image of the Father State (Devlet Baba), constructing and defending “common good,” punishing and rewarding accordingly irrespective of societal consensus (2008, 159).

The adult supervision I earlier referred to seemed to be an impact of the homogenizing effect of the nation building, I thought. I agreed with the author. “Devlet Baba knows the best,” or “We should never oppose Devlet Baba, he has the right to
take and give [punish and reward]" are popular sayings among the Turks—at least among older generations. The state and its apparatuses were impersonated as the masculine power having the right over the family. Moreover, there, in fact, is the civilization divide between the urban “modern” class and the rural uncivilized masses or the modern and traditional in general regardless of whether they belong to the urban or rural spaces.

While I was doing research, I gathered so many other articles, books, and book sections. However, I decided to continue my research first with the literature the author used to construct his chapter. Most of them, I later noticed, were already on my desk, saved on my computer or already read. I went through the pile of the books, transferred articles to my tablet to read on-the-go and started reading the scholars Zeydanlioglu already gave me the clues of.

It was one of those days I did not want to stay in but get out of my apartment to enjoy the nice weather. Yet, I had lots of things to do. So I packed my bag with a bunch of snacks, a couple of bottles of water, and a little lunch box. I put my tablet and my notebook, as well. I planned on reading outside the library where I could take a coffee break with my friends to distract myself for a little bit. I found a bench in the middle of one of the busiest sections of the campus and started reading my articles. First, I opened Ahiska’s “Occidentalism: The Fantasy of the Modern” (Ahiska 2003).” Instead of reading it, I clicked my notes and realized a story I had forgotten about:

During our regular lunch get-together, [My friends name] told us, "I wanted to read Orhan Pamuk’s Istanbul for so long but it was not available at the library. I asked for an inter library loan and finally the book arrived. On the book it stays “Middle East Collection.” What? Come one it is Istanbul. How can it be the Middle East? (...) I read something a
couple of days ago. It was a collection of old newspapers of Istanbul and people’s complaints about the life in the city. And one of them was so funny. Someone complained, I guess in the 1950s or 1960s, that people push each other getting on and off the ferry while it is in fact so dangerous. But think about, it is still the same!” a laughter followed. Then she went on, “While I was in San Francisco for the conference, people were taking their bikes on the ferry. What I noticed that they were so respectful to others and they were not in hurry. And if I were to take my bike on a ferry, I would put my bike on the rack that is nearest to exit,” and other laughter, and, “I would do that to get off the ferry the first. But in San Francisco, they were proceeding further and put their bike to the furthest bike rack so that the rest of the passenger would not have any inconvenience. So I guess this makes us Middle East.” No one commented further. Yet, I told her, “I guess I will use this little anecdote in my dissertation.” She smiled and said, “Who knows how many comments of ours you use in your dissertation.” “Not so many of yours. In fact, I guess I have none from you. But this one is definitely will be there. I, yet, don’t know how!” I replied.

Reading this note, I noticed how I was surrounded by various examples of being in between the West and East, and how being considered as Middle Easterner was for so many. I put a reminder on my phone to include this story in my dissertation and then I finally started reading Ahiska’s paper.

Ahiska starts her discussion with Turkey’s relationship with the European Union, to which a full membership has been a goal for Turkey in its Westernization project. On the early pages of her article, she refers to a comic strip that she had seen in a popular magazine in Turkey years ago and that and to the capturing the “catching the train” metaphor—where train stands for the West, civilization, or the European Union (2003, 352). “The comic strip shows a “typically” dressed Kurdish man lazily sitting in a forlorn train station looking at a “typically” Western-style dressed young woman waiting for the train with a big suitcase. He says, “The last train has long gone, Miss. So, marry me.”
The message is clear: The train metaphor is functional to deploy the desire for a Western future embodied in the figure of a Western-looking woman, yet the present is the problem-stricken Turkey unable to deal with its Kurdish or other ethnic-identity problems” (2003, 352).

Later in the article, referring to Gole (2000), Ahiska argues that “the wide gap between the present and the future, captured in the train metaphor, is not contingent to Turkish modernity since non-Westerners are alienated from their own present which they want to overcome by projecting themselves either to the utopian future or to the golden age of the past” (2003, 354). This statement, I thought, was very important. It was referring to the utopian future that can be considered to be “a member of the West or the superior” or “becoming the white” which is discussed by Nandy and Fanon. Although in the literature the impact or role of the past or the traditional is stressed in creating ambivalence in-between the Western and the Eastern, the past is never referred as a golden age to be desired by the individuals. For instance, Nandy (1988, 17-18) discusses how India’s past was “handled” as a problem by the colonial ideology. Yet, he never considers it as a destination people would strive to reach.

Noting her point on the utopian future and the golden age of the past, I went on reading Ahiska’s article. With my digital pen, I wrote, “She argues that the formation of the current Turkish society is an “Occidental fantasy, which evoked a ‘lack’ in the ‘people’ upon which it organized the ‘desire’ to fill it” (Ahiska 2003, 365). The white Turks my interviewees or other authors referring to appeared on Ahiska’s pages in the form “occidental fantasy.” More or less, I reckoned, every one—scholars or ordinary
people—talk about the same division: an educated Western class with the mission of civilizing the society and the people.

I paused for a second. I started thinking about my first chapter and my desire to study a topic related to the ordinary people. And I asked myself: “Am I doing this because of my personal unrest of belonging to the people who has been considered as ‘lacking?’ I belong to the ordinary, I guess, and am I trying to give voice to the ‘lacking’ people I am a member of? Still, there are people who ‘accuse me of being a White Turk!’ Is this a guilt of ignoring the ordinary or the rage of being ignored by Others?” My answer was mixed. I was both the ignored and ignorer. And, yes. My empathy with the ordinary people whom I considered as voiceless was one of the personal reasons of choosing the ordinary as my target population. In addition to this discovery of my self, I also discovered supporting arguments and historical analyses that lead to my conclusion that colonialism of minds and cultures was relevant to Turkish case in terms of its division of people as inferior-superior or modern-backward. The denial of the local and traditional components inherited from the history of the people and production of hybridity was through domestic reflections of the West. Still, I was not really sure whether I was trying to comprehend a case of internal or external colonialism, or I was not sure whether they could be separated.

Reading more on the idea of colonialism in Turkey or the Orientalism within the orient, I noticed another analogy to the colonial White man. Deringil (2003) and Houston (2009) argue that the Westernization process of the Turkish society, hence the emergence of the Occidental Orientalist, starts with the “White Man’s Burden wearing a fez.” That is, late Ottoman and the Republican era coincide with the emergence of
Orientalists within the Orient—especially over the minorities such as Kurds. Moreover, Houston (2009) discusses the assimilative and orientalist approaches of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Later, I discussed this chapter, especially the emergence of domestic actors of Orientalism, with another friend of mine who is a graduate student in Historical Sociology. He suggested that I read Hanioglu’s *The Young Turks in Opposition* (1995) and *Preparation for a Revolution* (2001). In *The Young Turks in Opposition*, Hanioglu masterfully analyzes the formation of the ‘modernizing’ ideology of the Committee of Union and Progress, and Young Turks whose ideological impact is still dominant in contemporary Turkey in both ideological and institutional practices. Especially, their opposition to the traditional—including the traditional rule of the Sultan—and later ethno-religious diversity for security concerns are among many analyses in Hanioglu’s books. His analysis of the development of the basis of institutional and cultural practices in Turkey was similar to the discussion of various other works I read before. For instance, Smith (2005) and Icduygu et al. (2008) portrays the process of homogenization of the culture in the direction of the Western science and values and Turkification or Islamization of the population. Smith (2005, 464) also argues that for some the rise of Kurdish nationalism was sparked by the “structural violence” caused by systematic deprivation and injustice by the state, and for some others it was a reaction to “internal colonialism.”

I was quite clear about the ambiguous attitude of the ordinary Turks towards the West and East. The historical process of Westernization imposed upon the population who were forced to deny their traditions and past could well be the roots of the ongoing
ambivalence. The reluctance of the West to accept the Turks to the core of the West, which so many of my interlocutors considered as a reality, also designates the roots of the ‘feeling of bastardness.’ Moreover, the practice of Orientalism, which related the East with negative images, certainly had its legacy through generations in creating the idea of ‘staying away from the East’ or the inferiority of the Eastern turned into a project whose impact, as Ahiska outlines, “on the Turkish nationalists was more than a mere import of Western concepts and techniques and was not just a movement of ‘modernity’ in times and space, but a ‘performance for the imagined audience’” (2003, 367). The Westernization process has been to impress the ‘mother civilization,’ which, for many, has been reluctant to accept Turks as its own child.

Still, despite the fact that people were forced to leave their traditions aside and adopt the Western style of living or mindset, their attachment to the golden ages of their past was present. It exists in the form of an idea that the Turks, as their Ottoman ancestors, had the mission of ‘civilizing the inferior East.’ I asked, “Did the Ottoman Empire have a colonial mission?” It definitely is a broad question that would require a separate theoretical discussion and an empirical analysis. As I mentioned earlier, one of my interviewees told me that the Ottoman Emprise should have assimilated the Arabs when ‘they had the chance.’ Similarly, almost all of the people that referred to the Ottoman Empire history talked about cultural and religious tolerance in contrast with the Western expansionist history. For them neither the Western nor the Eastern regions under the rule of the Ottoman Empire lost their identities as the Ottomans were not an assimilating power. However, for instance, Ahiska (2003, 359) does not hesitate in criticizing Edward Said for ignoring the “colonial past of the Ottoman history” or
particularly not “discussing the colonization of Palestine by the Ottoman Empire.”

Indicating in her footnote 47 that although “the power regime in the Ottoman Empire was highly centralized but flexible enough to hold different ethnic and religious communities over a large territory from Balkans to the Arabic peninsula under control by allowing some cultural autonomy to each community. The peculiar mechanisms and rationale of the Ottoman rule in its colonies is a vast subject for Turkish and Western scholars that lies beyond the scope of her article,” (2003, 375), She argues that because of “the complicated relationship between the Ottoman Empire and colonialism, the status of Turkey in relation to the history of colonialism is further complicated by the fact that the Ottoman Empire was itself a colonizing force” (2003, 360).

Most of my informants believed that the Ottoman Empire was not a colonial power. It occurred to me that Turks are not the only ones who consider the Ottoman Empire as lacking colonial ambitions. For instance, Slugglett (2014) argues that the Middle Eastern states or the Arabs had never seen the Ottoman Empire as a colonial power until the introduction of nation-state or national ideologies into the Arab political life by the Western states. I discussed the historical example of Lawrence of Arabia, which occurred during my interviews so many times, in my previous chapter. It is a ‘fact’ among the ordinary Turks that “Western undercover strategies created the idea of an Ottoman Empire as an assimilative power among the Arabs who are incompetent to reason on their own but always susceptible to be made use of.” Most of my informants believed in the existence of a tie between the Arabs and the Turks. It is a connection, or a the presence of an imagined community brought together by a common history and shared life styles—i.e. similar food, that Yoruk and Vatikiotis (2013) describes.
This discussion on whether the Ottoman Empire was a colonial power or how people—the Turks and other ethno-religious groups once rules by the Ottoman Empire—perceive the Ottoman rule reminded me of one of my memories. It is a memory from late 1990s. It is a memory that I believe partially illustrates the colonial past of the Turks, their proud, and how it is perceived in the ‘Other lands.’

Like most of the locals of his village and its neighboring settlements, my grandfather was a mason. He was always proud of his work and praised the art he and his fellow masons built in the footsteps of Mimar Sinan, one of the most famous architects of the Ottoman Empire and who was born in a village that was less than half an hour from my grandfather’s village. My grandfather always told us how he raised his wealth, most of which he later admitted to lose in gambling, by working at the restoration projects in the old capitals of the Ottoman Empire. He proudly told so many times, “My master and I were among the highly demanded masons. We were hired to build and restore so many minarets. Not so many masons could do our work. I risked my life so many times on the top of minarets fixing them. And they paid us well because we were the masters.” He had an obvious emotional attachment to the stone minarets or mosques in different cities. He was even proud of the masonry in the Balkans where he had never had a chance to visit. In fact, he had no desire to visit anywhere but the Dardanelles and the Yemen. He had no memory of his own father who was a soldier at the Ottoman army. All he was told was that his father left for a war, either at the Dardanelles or the Yemen, when my grandfather was only two or three years old. Perhaps, his attachment to the stone buildings in the Balkans, which we used to see on the news frequently due to the ‘popularity’ of these lands as a result of the Bosnian War,
was partially because he lost his father in a ‘foreign’ land he had never seen. He was so proud of those buildings that once he told my cousins and me, “My stomach is killing me. I even cannot have another operation. Doctors are telling me that I would not survive another one. But if I were young and healthy, I would pack and go to restore those blown up minarets. They are our ancestors' heritage to us.” He was talking about the buildings exploded during the chaos in the Balkans in early 1990s. Probably, some of the buildings were not even historical buildings or had nothing to do with the Ottoman Empire. Still, for him, each and every one of them was a legacy of the Ottoman Empire that needed to be protected [by the Turks].

Destruction of one of the structures, particularly, made my grandfather, who knows how many more other Turks, exceedingly upset. The destruction of the Mostar Bridge! The footage of the destruction of the bridge seemed to be as dramatic as the broadcasting of the dead bodies [of the Muslims] during the Bosnian War—it is quite sad even to write but I believe that for so many Turks the broadcasting of the destruction of ‘the’ bridge was even more upsetting than the graphic images of the loss of human life. The footage was ‘liberally’ used in the Turkish media. Even the pop culture did not hesitate to use it, for instance, for a music video in which the singer reproached, “even if the god might have forgotten …”

Later in college, I was watching a documentary about the reconstruction of the Mostar Bridge. Japanese engineers, Turkish masons, and a local engineer were cooperating for restoring the Bridge. To be honest, I do not remember the ‘nationality’ or the ‘ethnicity’ of the local engineer that is why I chose the ‘local’ as her identity. In the documentary the old building blocks of the bridge were being lifted from the river and
marked to be reused for the authenticity of the symbolic bridge. The re-construction project or the cooperation among different identities seemed to be harmonious, while there were sudden and symbolic crises. They were clashes of the pasts. Well, in fact, it was Clashes of the futures!

The Turkish masons believed in the necessity of sacrificing a sheep. “We shed blood for Allah. Sacrifice to Allah. Otherwise, we do not believe that we will be safe from the accidents while building the bridge,” one of the Turkish masons told in the documentary. Another told the movie crew that they were there to rebuild what their ancestors left and they needed to sacrifice because their religious beliefs required them to do so. Similarly, Japanese engineers were hanging prayers on the construction side and praying for the safety and success of the project. The local engineer was not happy about the sacrifice by the Turkish masons. She complained that those lands witnessed enough blood and no more needed. Besides, for her, she wanted to keep the project as a symbol of uniting the divided people, not as a symbol that might have engendered the presence of any particular identity such as Muslim or Ottoman. I agreed with her. She was already aware of the Ottoman heritage and the “marvelous expertise of the Ottoman architects”—in her words—in building the bridge. That is why she guided a group of researchers in finding and analyzing the archived projects of the Bridge. I thought, why not leave, at least once, the symbolic practices of religions or carry out them in private for the sake of unity. But then, I asked, whether reconstructing the Bridge necessitated binding or dividing the identities. A bridge connects two separate sides of water. Without the presence of the separated, a bridge might be meaningless. For the local engineer, any reference to any identity was risky in the reconstruction...
because identities had already destroyed the city and its inhabitants. Turkish masons
sacrificing a sheep and hanging the Turkish flag at the construction side, for her, would
seize the meaning of the reconstruction and turn it into an Ottoman or assimilative
propaganda. I did not doubt the validity of her claim. I thought it was a ‘nasty chauvinist’
act of the masons who were a reflection of the neo-Ottoman or pan-Islamic ideology. I
am sure my grandfather would not have been proud of my agreement with the local
engineer but I thought that there was no need for such public display of affection with
someone’s own identity. It was those affiliations that were going to set the future
meaning of the Bridge. Why would they let the shadow of the past rule the future of the
region or just for that particular Bridge? It was a single case of re-writing the history of
an artifact. On the one hand, the Turkish masons were trying to write the reconstruction
as a success of the grandchildren of the Ottomans in re-granting a masterpiece to the
locals. On the other hand, the engineer was trying to keep even the possibility of the
perception of the re-birth of an external power outside their lives. The pasts were
clashing. The futures were being contested. Ottoman colonialism was right there, right
in the middle of people’s life.

Going back to this memory including my grandfather and a ‘simple’ documentary
that have much more meaning now compared to the time when I first watched it, made
me reach a conclusion: Although the Ottoman Empire might have had a different
system of rule, colonialism was a part of its history. At least, people in everyday life, on
the opposing sides of a spectrum: the colonizer and the colonized, ‘still live’ it. The
ordinary Turks could carry the feeling of having inherited the cultural superiority over
other lands and other identities within their country. Moreover, the Westernization
project of the White Turk could create the feeling of being colonized and the ambiguous relationship between the feeling of superior and inferior.

It could have stressed the hybridity of Turkish self in being both the Western and Eastern while wholly belonging to the neither. It could have created the dynamics of internal colonialism of the White Turk over the ordinary Turk and the Turk over the non-Turk. Orientalism within the Orient could be a summary of the current situation of the identity market the ordinary Turks are situated within.

**A Self with No Obvious Other**

The shepherd, the ex-illegal-kick-boxer or the engineer who had visited Israel were among various interviews that I could not share all the details of in this already long dissertation. Moreover, each and every single account I took note of during my fieldwork had their unique understanding of the issues that we talked about that it makes it almost impossible to turn them into a fit-for-all summary. However, the free association technique I used, especially during my 163 semi-structured interviews, strengthen the validity of the conclusion I drew from the information I gathered. I already shared the mostly referred associations with certain words, for instance America, in my previous chapter. Among the words I asked people to free associate were “the West,” “the East,” “the Self,” and “the Other.” I have to confess that ‘the Self’ and ‘the Other’ were wrong choices of words to be used in free associations in rather ordinary settings since I noticed that they were too abstract that instead of free association people sometimes wanted to discuss the meanings of these words or sometimes ordered what comes to their mind involuntarily and with great doubt. Still, even for these highly challenging and challenged words, I was able to gather key words that were frequently referred to.
The West and the East often resulted in a chuckle or a smile during my interviews. When I asked my interlocutors to free-associate these two words, most of them gave me the look, “I know what your goal is here!” They tried to give me the non-conventional answers starting with the clarification, “Most of the people think (...) but I believe (...).” The West was mostly associated with: ‘The European Union,’ ‘Europe,’ ‘civilization,’ ‘where Turkey tries to enter,’ ‘The Crusades,’ ‘Israel,’ ‘Janus-Faced,’ ‘self-centric,’ ‘development,’ ‘good-life,’ ‘promiscuous,’ ‘capitalist,’ ‘liberty of women,’ ‘geographic location,’ ‘Ataturk,’ ‘where Turkey will never be admitted to,’ ‘what we are pretending to be,’ ‘welfare,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘beautiful cities,’ ‘handsome/beautiful,’ ‘assimilation/colonialism,’ and ‘why the rest of the world is poor.’ The associations were both negative and positive. People usually indicated both negative and positive images at the same time arguing that there are different faces of the West. In some cases, I did not need to ask people what comes to their mind first when I say the East as counting the images of the West they had in mind, they usually referred to the East and shared their perceptions of the East. For the East, mostly repeated words were: ‘Oil,’ ‘underdevelopment,’ ‘ignorance,’ ‘exploited,’ ‘religion,’ ‘bigotry,’ ‘the cradle of problems,’ ‘the cradle of civilizations,’ ‘ugly people,’ ‘Islam,’ ‘where Turkey [mis]represented within,’ ‘the source of all our problems,’ ‘treachery,’ ‘dirty,’ ‘provincial,’ ‘aesthetic architecture,’ ‘delicious food,’ and ‘where Turkey is heading to.’ The connotations with the East were predominantly negative. Except a few individuals who argued that the East is where Turkey really belongs to and should start a union with as an alternative to the European Union, most individuals were against the idea of associating Turkey with the East. The Other as a term to free-associate with did not reveal a lot of responses. People usually
gave me the following answers, “The Other is who does not belong to us” and “those who try to do harm to us.” The self was not a good choice of wording in terms of reaching out people’s images, either. “I guess, Turks,” “First of all, a Turk and then a Muslim,” and “Anybody who works for this country is from us” were among the common responses. Some people also told me, “I am not a member of any groups” or “I don’t belong to a party or an organization.”

These keywords, I believe, are in line with Turks’ ambiguity about their Self, their perception of the West as the unwelcoming mother civilization, and their image of the East as direction to be stayed away from. It is, I think, quite clear how the Westernization of the country created Orientalists within Turkey that ordinary Turks have the sense of being inferior when their Eastern traits are considered. Although most of them associate themselves with Islam, the impact of religion on their lives usually considered as a setback. The West is desired as an ultimate goal while the Western unwillingness creates the distancing from associating fully with the West. The love and hate relationship with the mother civilization, which is introduced in the country through the Westernization policies of the founding figures of the country, seems to be a permanent component of the self-identification.

Every positive aspect filtered from Occidental and Oriental worldview is associated with the Self. Similarly, the negative images are assigned to the Other. Therefore, neither the West nor the East is ‘the’ Other for the ordinary Turks. Neither of them is the obvious definition of the Self, either. There is no Other while anyone and anything could be an Other. Similarly, there is no clear Self, while anything positive can belong to the Self. The Other is the feminine, the weak, the traditional, the outdated, the
ignorant, the dirty, and the inferior. The Self is the masculine, the strong, the modern, the authentic, the superior, the master of the Other in need of being civilized, and, the unfortunate bastard that does belongs to neither the East nor the West.
CHAPTER 5
TODAY AS THE OTHER: NOSTALGIA FOR A STRONGER FUTURE

The Letter Victim to My Fieldwork

It was April 13, 2015. A week after my thirty-first birthday. I had spent my entire day in the library, except for a Five-Dollar-Krishna-lunch break on the campus and dinner with friends. I spent my hours walking from one shelf to another to find more books on nostalgia. I took the stairs to “to burn calories not watts,” as a sign in the library humorously reminded. I really did not care about how much electricity I would have wasted by using the elevator. My aim was to make use of the stairs to exercise. Moreover, later during the dinner, we, foreigners, already proudly agreed that we were doing way more for the environment than an “ordinary American” would do. So, I could have wasted some electricity, if I wanted to. During the dinner, “Back home,” we all agreed, “our consumption habits were better than the ones in America. Still, things were changing.” We all complained that, back home, the quality of the food or the issue of recycling used to be not serious problems before capitalism ruined natural agriculture and introduced more processed food to our tables.

After a dinner I came back home. When I entered my apartment, I poured some ice cold water and look at the mug standing on my bookshelf across my kitchen. It was a souvenir from Texas. On it, “Don’t mess with Texas” was printed in the colors of the American flag. In the mug, there was a letter written a few years ago. It was a goodbye letter that I read only once. I kept it in that mug and stared at it every time I felt lonely. I never read it again. Staring at the letter simply reminded me the good old days. On this particular night, my mind was occupied by the notion of nostalgia, a trend that I identified during my fieldwork. Inevitably, I had been questioning my own life and
relating my findings to my experiences. One of the lessons I learned that was nostalgia was almost a constant in our lives. We all had our own ways dealing with our past and setting the limits of its impact within our emotional and physical strength. Some forms of nostalgia, such as the one for the quality of the food we used to consume before corporates took over the local agriculture, were common across individuals. Some were more personal such as the one triggered by a goodbye letter. I also came to the conclusion that some personal yearnings were good or beneficial while some were hurtful and ‘unnecessary.’ It was a premise that my research had added to my personal life.

That letter, I felt, was unnecessary to keep. I reasoned that it was ruining my present and the future. I took it from the mug, unwrapped the turquoise wristband that belonged to the author of the letter, and gently put the papers in the blue recycle bin by my kitchen counter. With the hope that I would be forgiven by the author of the letter, I finally said goodbye to a past. A past that I lived. A past that I selectively and routinely reminded myself. Then, I added more questions to my struggle with the notion of nostalgia: Is it always so hard to give up on the past? Why did those Turks that I met yearn for or admire a past that they had never lived? Why is ‘the present’ an ‘Other’ for them? How is their admired past related, if at all, to their present, future or their ‘self?’ Finally, does a past have to be a victim, like my letter, to accept change in the present and the future?

**Nostalgic Turks**

While I was conducting research for a previous chapter at the university library, the title of a book looked so eye-catching: *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics*, by Ozyurek (2006). Although I knew that I was not going to read
it for a while, the words “Nostalgia” and “Everyday Politics” were definitely related to my coming chapter. Hence, I added it to the stack of the books to be checked out.

My judgment of the book by its cover was right. At the very beginning of her book, which is an outcome of a “Field work and Family Work (2006, 23-25),” the author writes:

“This time,” my mother said, her voice suddenly serious, “you will find Turkey very different.” It was the summer of 1997. She and my father had just picked me from the Ataturk Airport in Istanbul. (...) During our two-hour ride through endless traffic to their apartment on the other side of the Bosphorus, my parents kept on pointing. They pointed to veiled women drivers in cars. They showed me the countless new mosque complexes on the fringes of the city. They read out Islamist car stickers such as “Peace is in Islam.” All the while, they went on and on about the policies the Islamist Welfare Party, whose coalition had ruled the country from 1995 until a few months before my return to Turkey. They were not perfectly happy that a discreet military intervention into politics had banned the party, but my mother especially was relieved that political Islam had been contained, at least for the time being (2006, 1).

After reading the first paragraph, I put the book down. I delved into my fieldwork notes and searched for the keyword “Annem” [my mother in Turkish] and “My Mother” as I was not sure in which language I had typed my stories about my family. I could not find the story that I was looking for. I started to search my notebooks page by page. Eureka! A two-pages-long story on my dust-covered notebook. I needed to clean my apartment, I thought. I put the notebook on my desk and cleaned the dust on my bookshelf. I was distracted. Without reading the details of my story, I continued reading Ozyurek’s book. Later in her introduction, She indicates, “The most important component of this research, however, was my being a member of a devoted Kemalist
family” (2006, 24). After reading the section describing her family background, I took my notebook again and read the conversation I had with my mother on June 15, 2012.

My mother is not affiliated with any political party. Nor does she have a strong political stand. If any of her family members is a candidate from a party in any elections, she votes for that party. Except, as she once told, she had never voted for an Islamist or a leftist party. Unlike my father, she never keeps her political (non)affiliation as a secret. Despite her lack of strong party affiliation, unlike Ozyurek’s mother, my mother had similar ‘feelings’ about the increase of the public appearance of the Islamist sentiments in her daily life.

We were sitting by the window in my parents’ living room and drinking the Turkish coffee I prepared. Even though we had less in common to talk about after so many years of living in different ‘spaces’ or ‘homes,’ I asked her about the social gatherings called “altın günü.” Altın günü is a social gathering (only women) during which each guest brings a gold coin for the host. It is a sort of social through which women creates an informal “saving account.” It is a brilliant micro-economic institution. However, reading Tournaments of Value: Sociability in a Yemeni Town by Meneley (1996) in Modern Politics of the Middle East taught, by Dr. Patricia Woods at the University of Florida, I noticed that those “altın günü” gatherings were more than saving gold or eating some delicious pastries. Like the socials in the Yemeni town where Meneley conducted her ethnography, those altın günü gatherings were public spaces where women could exhibit their family wealth or the level of the luxury they enjoy. Those gatherings were public spaces where women, mostly housewives, had a chance to open their private wealth/life to the public and represent their families.
Many years ago, my mother and her friends objected the exaggeration of the ‘hospitality’ during those gatherings. They complained, using different words, that ‘the gap’ between the hospitality is indicative of the income gap between the ‘club members’ hence there should be a limit that everyone could afford. I had always admired my parents’ sensitivity for the worse-off families. For my mother, the meaning of the gatherings was to “get-together, socialize, and get rid of the stress of the household errands,” not to “show off.” The ‘regulations’ must have not worked as expected. My mother was not very happy with her social gatherings any more. But this time for another reason.

“I am going to your cousin’s at 1 o’clock,” she replied. “Oh! How many altın günü do you have this year?” I asked. She laughed and said “Only three. Last year I had way more. I prefer to stay home. I meet my neighbors … No one talks about politics here. In our altın günü, you should see, everyone talks about politics. It is politics and politics… One of them likes Erdogan and the other supports Fethullah [Gulen]. And they clash. It is nerve racking. Their voice is higher than ever before. Now, they think they know Islam better than anyone else. They wear their headscarves,” she laughs, “in such a funny way. It looks so funny. … There is a rumor that they make their hairdressers design the way they wear their headscarves. … They drive expensive cars. Now their turn. They are eating the cake [implying that Islamist are given more economic incentives—usually through illegal means]. But what is really disturbing is that they [Islamists] are really loud these days. One says the skirts are too short and the other complains that women wear short sleeves. … It used to be better. The headscarf was just a headscarf. Everybody used to mind his or her own business. No woman told another woman how to dress. …
Why the discussion on politics? … Where does this [strong affiliation with political parties] come from? We all know it. Yes. You are now more powerful. You have the money. The government is yours. But please keep it out of my one-day that I come together with my friends.”

My mother was not really pleased with the changing dynamics of her social. She clearly wanted ‘things to be the old way.’ She refused to be a part of her present time that so many people might not even find interesting or important for our study of politics. She was not really keen on living a social life that was being shaped in a way that encompassed highly visible Islamist notions.

My mother was not the only individual who somehow had discontent with the contemporary situation the Turkish society was in. People with (different) political affiliations ‘yearned for a past’ that they considered as better than the present and the future. They longed for a past, for an omnipresent reality. Some of the ‘pasts’ that were described during my fieldwork were ‘more serious’ than my mother’s social gatherings. They were more ‘political’ in nature and some were more related to international relations. Some dreamed of a more secular Turkey allied with the West while some desired a different international system that was (also) in the advantage of a ‘global (Sunni) Muslim community’ in which Turkey was not ally of the West but a ‘balancing power’ against the ‘non-Muslim world.’ There were various accounts/kinds of nostalgia all of which were, in fact, tensions between different identities or struggles of creating or strengthening the lines between ‘a’ self and the Other. They were different forms of representation of the Other disguised in the tension of yearning for a past or a ‘home’ that was shelter for the Self.
“Let the Caliphate Free!” Yearning for Power

In July 2013, I asked a family member, who is a faculty at Erciyes University, Kayseri, if he could arrange a few meetings with his colleagues. He was really enthusiastic to help me and sure that his colleagues would be willing to help me. However, it turned out that most of them found my topic “too political” and did not want to talk about it. A couple of them were “okay” for an interview but too busy. Besides, they did not have much to say about my topic but a few suggestions such as “He should conduct research on a certain ethnic group or a certain country,” my family member told me. Despite the infeasibility of interviews, I decided to visit him. It was in vain. They were really reluctant to talk. I was mad at them. How could they be in the ‘same business’ and not help a ‘fellow researcher?’ “Forget about it,” I told myself. I decided to go to my parents’ and work on my previous interviews. Before that, I decided to stop by at the student cafeteria for a cold drink. I said goodbye to my relative, went to the cafeteria and bought a bottle of water.

It was very crowded. Students were chatting, exchanging course materials, and getting each other’s course notes copied at the little copy center. I watched them silently. They were like a colony of ants running around. Some of them were in a hurry. Some of them looked so anxious. Some of them were relaxed and checking out other students, maybe, with the hope of finding their future spouses. Those old days!

There were many women wearing headscarves. It would have been a strange scene when I was in college because the dress code did not allow headscarf on university campuses. Most of them were sitting in groups around a table. They were laughing laud; which Tayyip Erdogan has recently declared as improper public behavior for women. I kept watching the crowd perhaps for another minute. Then, I felt being
watched. I looked at the table right next to me and I was right. There was a student in her early twenties looking at me. She kindly asked, “Do you need help? You look confused! Looking for someone or something?” She was right. I was looking for something. More information for my dissertation. Hence, I replied, “Actually, I am looking for something or I should say someone. My name is Nail and I am a PhD student at University of Florida. I am conducting research for my dissertation and I am looking for interviewees to ask a few questions. But everyone seems to be quite busy these days.” And I smiled. She was surprised. “You came all the way to Kayseri to do research? Impressive. My name is Hatice. Nice to meet you” she responded. “Oh! In fact, I am originally from Kayseri. Family and business at the same time. Nice to meet you, too” I clarified. She continued the conversation by inviting me to her table and asking what my research is about. I summarized my topic and asked her if she had any ideas to share with me. Before she started talking, I briefly indicated the research protocol and the confidentiality of the information.

Her first question to me was, “What are you curious about? Are you interested in the Kurdish issue? European Union? What do you mean by the Other?” “I don’t know,” I said. “It can be anything or anyone! You said the Kurds and the European Union. Are those what immediately comes to your mind?” She said, “Yes and no.” And she continued, “The Kurds and Turks are the same. It is the external powers that make us fight. Muslim against Muslim. … Why? It is to their advantage if we keep fighting. Unfortunately, we have so many separating powers but not a single unifying one. (…) The international system! They call it international but it is in fact simply Western. It is a Christian club. Who does represent the Muslims? No one. There is the Pope. But no
Muslim equivalent. There is a supreme authority for the Christians. Why not for the Muslims? We should have never abolished the Caliphate!” I was shocked. In Turkey, it is rather difficult to meet someone who indicates such harsh criticism of Ataturk’s reforms openly in public. Criticism in disguise or playing with the words, maybe! But, not directly! I was a total stranger. We had ‘known’ each other probably for about ten or fifteen minutes and her early comment was a straight disagreement with the abolition of the institute of the Caliphate. “Did I just come across a radical?” I was worried.

I continued our conversation by trying to make it “less radical.” I asked her, “Do you think the international relations is an arena for the Western interests? Or as you said, for Christians only?” “It sure is,” she indicated. “It is an unbalanced interaction between the West and the Muslim world. It is also unbalanced between the poor and the rich. The West is well represented in any international matter. However, there is no strong state that can stand against the West for the Muslims or the poor (…) The Muslim world is leaderless and this is our fault. Ataturk, of course for his time, did what supposed to be done. Still, we should have kept the authority of the Caliphate. Now, imagine, if Turkey held the Caliphate, we would have the authority to talk on behalf of the Muslim world. I read about the Ottoman history. (…) I like to read more on how the caliphates ruled the Islamic world and the minorities in the Empire. They also had power over how other countries treated the Muslims. How did they do it? With the power they had. It was a world of justice, at least the Muslims were represented, too.” “So” I asked, “You think that the institution of the Caliphate is necessary for a just international system where balance of power would be achieved between the ‘Christian Club,’ as you put it, and the ‘Muslim World.’ Did I get it right?” “Yes. Balance is important. Religion is,
too. Look at the history. There are countless examples. Islam or the Ottoman Empire used to be the ruling power not only in its borders but also all over the world. When there was injustice, one decree from the Caliphate was enough to end the oppression. The Ottoman Empire did not have to fight a war for each and every Muslims community. The power they had and their role of representing the Muslims were enough,” she summarized her point of view. I wanted to complicate her train of thought. Was it necessary? Perhaps not. I just said, “I see.” She just nodded her head as if we both agreed. It was, in fact, not an agreement but I was not sure how to continue. Luckily, she just continued, “Of course, I don’t know as much as you do. Still, there is one obvious matter: Muslims used to be represented by a leader. They had a place to take refuge in. They had an authority to turn to. They had a leader to turn to. A supreme court to solve the problems or controversies. It was balancing against the Europe.” I corrected, “Maybe more than balancing! Dominating?” She agreed, “Yes, even dominating. In short, an era of Islamic power when all the Muslims had, at least, the security and protection of the Ottoman Empire.”

She obviously had a feeling of insecurity as a Muslim. Her insecurity did not stem from [past] regulations over the Muslim identity in public places in Turkey, which I expected. She seemed to have come to terms with the domestic obstacles of “being a conservative Muslim” and she was confident that the government was very successful in “defending the rights of the Muslims [in Turkey] who had been under severe oppression for many decades.” Her worries were mostly due to the lack of an international actor that would have the will and power to defend the Islamic world similar to the order that used to exist once upon a time. “Erdogan,” she said, “can be the leader
who is close to achieve such a dream, such an order in which the Palestinians would be
set free just by a letter.” My inner-voice was, mostly, responded with a ‘cynical’ “Sure!”

Hatice, who tried to explain her desire for a Caliphate to rule the Islamic world,
was not alone in her yearning for the Golden Ages of the Ottoman Empire. Those times
when a decree of the Caliphate would have solved the “misfortune of the Muslims” or
ended the “cruelty over the faithful”, as some of my interlocutors believed, must have
been restored. Otherwise, they supposed, the future was not bright for the Muslims.
“Cruelty, torture, oppression, poverty, and corruption would never leave us alone, if we
do not do our best to repossess the power that would speak for the Muslims,” Bulent, a
forty-eight-years-old retired Imam (prayer or hodja), for instance, argued.

I met Bulent in Ankara where he came from Kocaeli. After having lived in a little
German town for sixteen years, he moved back to Turkey. He worked in Germany
through a civil organization, which hired him as an Imam for almost fifteen years.
Missing Turkey, he decided to come back and participated in another civil organization
with the help of his savings. Bulent and I decided to meet in Tunus Caddesi, a central
location in Ankara that I was very familiar with because the bus stop of our college was
located there. I asked him if he could meet me at the Bilkent bus stop and he agreed to
meet after the Friday prayer.

I went to the bus stop almost thirty minutes early and I anxiously wondered what
would be the best place to interview him. While we were in college we had our favorite
bars around that street due its location. However, they were not the best options for my
interview. Besides, most of them were not even open, yet. Then, I noticed a little café
with heaters outside. It was not very cold. When he arrived, he was really keen on
having tea and eating *borek* (pastry usually with cheese or ground beef), and being able to smoke while talking.

We found a little table for two outside the café. We tried to fit our small stools to the narrow space between tables. I asked for tea and borek. We also asked for an ashtray. Bulent confessed, “This is my only bad habit. I don’t think I’ll quit. But I should.” I told him to get some professional help to quit smoking as it is an addiction. He nodded and took a cigarette out of his pocket. Our conversation was initially about his life in Germany where he left his two daughters for college education. “That’s why I go to Germany twice or three times a year. I miss my kids,” he got emotional. “They are very bright kids, Mashallah,” he proudly told me. “We should make sure that our girls receive education. As our Prophet commanded, we should treat our daughters, wives, mothers, our women with respect as they are our future,” he indicated. Unfortunately, in Turkey, for him, women were not given the liberty of education as who they are. “Until recently,” he complained, “our daughters wearing headscarves were not able to enter the universities. Why?” he raised his tone. “Just because they were seen as threat to modern Turkey!” he answered. Then, he continued, “modernity is not achieved by forcing people to give up their religious believes. Modernity is being able to ensure everyone has liberties. Germany, for example. Liberty of education, liberty of religion, liberty of praying. You cannot go anywhere by banning this or that outfit. Thanks to Allah, things are changing. Slowly but changing. We still have a lot to change. But day by day, we are finding the true path.” “What is the true path?” I asked him.

“Living in accordance with religion, respecting human rights, and making sure that everyone practices their own religion. Like in the Ottoman Empire,” he replied. “So
you think the Ottoman Empire was an empire of liberties. Especially for the religious freedom, right?” I asked. “Exactly!” He responded. “Now, they imitate the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Mosques are community based. So are the churches. There are some regulations or debates whether hijab, as they call it in Europe, should be allowed everywhere or not. But at least they discuss it. They don’t ban it right away,” he added.

“I see. Well, there were some regulations in the Ottoman Empire that might contradict the idea that religious liberties were all equal. However, I cannot cite any source right now. I should not oppose without any solid example. But I know there are various accounts that indicate that religious minorities were in fact not as free as we might think today. It is worth considering,” I told him. He reluctantly agreed with me and continued, “Of course! The Ottoman Empire was before everything a land of Islam. Of course, the priority will be the Muslims. Are Muslims in Israel as equal as the Jews? No! Are Muslims in Europe as equal as Christians? No! Maybe in America, you believe that you are all equal but I highly doubt it. The blacks are seen as inferior, like criminals. Muslims are seen as threat. We see it on the news. Why does a Muslim have to go through extra security steps in the airports? Why, in Switzerland, do people think that minarets are ugly and destroy the landscape [of the cities]? There is only one answer to this! Each state has its identity. An identity that they are founded by, their ancestors left them, they prioritize. They say they are democratic and everyone is equal. But in fact, it is not like that easy. Still, at least. Muslims [in Europe] are more free than they have been in in Turkey,” he paused for a little while, and asked, “You will not use my name or anything right? Because I don’t want to get trouble.”
I assured him, “as I told at the beginning, I must comply with the IRB regulations. It is an institution that we do not have in Turkey but I must obey the rules at my university. Moreover, I do not want anyone to get in trouble because of my research. If you don’t feel comfortable, we can either change the topic or end it here. I can also discard what I have already recorded on my phone.” “No. No need. Just do not use my name. Or don’t make me sound like a bigot. I am just trying to make us think about why Turkey for so many years denied the fact that ninety-nine percent of its population is Muslim, that we are the grandkids of the Ottoman, that we have long lasting state-tradition of tolerance,” he continued. After another brief silence, he added, “You are sure that you are not using my name, right?” I nodded. Then, he went on, “When George Bush declared the crusades against the Islamic world, did any of the Christians say, “Hold on! We are tolerant to other religions!” No. They, I am sure, were very proud of having a leader standing for them.” I stopped him; “Sorry for interrupting but Crusades with capital C and crusades with lower-case C are different. The first one is the Crusades we know. The second one means some sort of a campaign or mobilization. So he might have meant national mobilization or campaign. Not the historical one we all know.” He did not care. He told me that no matter what he meant he was a leader, at that time, for the Christian world. He was sure that “the Pope was smiling out of happiness in his palace at that very moment when George Bush gave that public speech.” However, the point he was hesitantly trying to make was different. His major concern and anxiety about the privacy of my data was about his unrest of Ataturk’s abolishing the Caliphate. “It is said that Ataturk was in fact a Jewish mason. A state with no religion has always been in the advantage of the Jews. Why else would someone
give up such a strong, powerful, meaningful and influential title or institution? Someone needs to restore it and it should be Turkey. We cannot let Syrians or Iraqis—so-called Muslims—restore it. (...) Quran clearly forbids us judging whether a person is a real Muslim or not. It is between Allah and the person. But we all know that these countries are American pawn. So, somebody needs to speak on behalf of the Muslim world. We need to be represented as a unified brotherhood,” he finally declared. I asked him, “so, it is the political power or the political representation the Muslim world needs, right? There should be an authority that politically represents the Muslim world. The other functions of the Caliphate such as having supreme religious authority are not necessarily needed? Did I understand correctly?” “Yes. But you are missing a point. You cannot really separate the political power from religion in Islam. The state is also run in accordance with the verses of Allah,” he answered. He continued his talk on the necessity of restoration of the old days when the Islamic world was unified under an authority. He added that Tayyip Erdogan seemed to accomplish that but he was not really very promising as he used to be “a pawn of the West” until his personal interests clashed with the capitalist international powers. After his rather ‘radical point of view,’ Bulent changed the subject to how Turkey started to embrace its Ottoman past and how “finally” it accepts its Muslim heritage. “There was still a long way to go,” he complained. “However,” he was optimistic, “as far as Turkey accepts that it was the grandchild of the Ottomans and stays in line with its traditions, norms, morals, and history, the future would be bright, not maybe for us or our children, but definitely for their grandchildren.”

Hatice’s and Bulent’s common desire for going back to the old days, days that they have never lived but learned, might sound rather radical. They directly opposed the
transformation initiated by M. Kemal Ataturk and it can be a crime as changing—or even suggesting to change—the secular structure of the Republic is outlawed. In this respect, I was not really comfortable recording their interviews and I deleted the records on the same day after transcribing them. However, these two interviewees were not the only ones asking for the restoration of the political/religious authority once held by the Ottoman Sultans.

“Are they out of their mind?” I wrote so many times on my notebook when I transcribed interviews. “What on earth makes these people want to restore a monarchy or a single-person rule instead of a democracy?” I asked a friend of mine. He laughed and replied, “We are Turks. What else do you expect us to want? They watch Magnificent Century—a famous TV show based on the era of the Suleiman the Magnificent—and fantasize about it. They all think that an Ottoman Sultan or its modern version will bring prosperity, wealth, power, and some international dignity. Let them fantasize. I have a saying: Ottoman history is the opium of the Turks. Give them some hope, they shut their mouth. They are a bunch of idiots who deserve nothing but a dictator.” I really did not like my friend’s condescending tone but I really found “Ottoman history is the opium of the Turks” brilliant.

Although Hatice and Bulent openly mentioned, there were many other individuals who “fantasized” about or implied the necessity of bringing back the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire. They were nostalgic for the days that none of them lived. They were yearning for a harbor where Muslims or Turks would anchor for safety. As one of my interlocutors told me, “Every nation, every community, every person needs a shelter or a harbor where they can protect themselves during a storm. Turks, thanks to Allah,
have a country. But Muslims are being tortured all over the world. We cannot provide shelter for all of them. We cannot fight against China and tell them to stop the atrocities against our brother Turks. But, what we can do is, we can unify them. It is one of the most difficult things, to unify the Muslims. (…) They fear that the Ottoman will rule them again. But they all want to stand as a single power towards the rest of the world. With the will of Allah, one day our grandchildren will see it. A unified Muslim world.”

Islamists or those, who yearned for an Islamic community, were quite obvious or, as my mother complained, more ‘out in public.’ They complained about a state of unrest, lack of the presence of the political body that would represent the Muslims, and the desire to go back to the time when Muslims were more powerful. Their perception of the Ottoman history was a history of tolerance and justice within which the Muslims were the main actors. Some of them complained that Friday was not an official holiday as a Muslim society should have had. Some complained that the Republic was founded on an illusion of being a member of the European society that is dominantly Christian and it does not fit the realities of the Turkish society. However, I do not want to draw a misleading picture. There were others yearning for a different country, a different home.

It was December 2014. A close friend of mine, whom I had not seen for almost two years, wanted to visit my hometown and spent the New Year’s Day. I was very excited about his visit but also anxious as my hometown was one of the last places on earth, well at least in Turkey, to celebrate the New Year’s Day. Moreover, my parents, whom I was staying with, had no tradition of celebrating it besides watching TV. When we were kids, we used to spend New Year’s Day with my cousins. We used to play board games or bingo, and tried to stay awake until the midnight for the countdown.
That was it. Nothing fancy to entertain my friend. No bars or nightclubs to go. I was left with one option: Invite the cousins to join to a night out—maybe a café where we could play board games or backgammon. I knew it was going to be ‘one of a kind’ New Year’s Day.

On the 29th, my sister and I picked him from the airport as I never drive in Turkey. My plan was to show him around and plan our ski trip after having breakfast at my parents’. Around 2 p.m. we were out wondering in the city. I took him to a terrace café where we could see the iconic mosque, the historical castle and the volcanic mountain in a single frame of view. We spent the time catching up and wondering what happened to all those Armenians or non-Muslims who used to pray in the churches sporadically distributed around the city center and were left in the hands of their brutal fate.

On the New Year’s Day, my cousins came to pick us up and we went to a historical district of the city that was mostly populated by the university students and by the residents of the gentrified neighborhoods of luxurious townhouses. We went to a café that was on the cliffs of the hill. The city was under a layer of smoke due to the high consumption of coal for heating. Natural gas was introduced almost a decade ago. Yet, not everyone could afford the installment of the new heating systems. Hence, the air was not as clean as the city government expected it to be. Still, the air was fresh on the hill and conversation was entertaining. We played some board games, drank so many teas of all sorts, and forgot about the countdown for the New Year. Right after midnight, we got hungry. It was going to be first late night snack of the year, we joked. Driving down the hill, I pointed out three churches—well one church and two ruins—and told my friend that on the hills the number of churches are higher as the hills were the main
residential areas while the plain where the modern city was located used to be the land
for agriculture.

One of my cousins made a joke: “This city used to be full of Armenians. They
used to be the locals they say. But when the barbaric Turks arrived, the Armenians
realized that they eat anything softer than the stone. They said, ‘We can’t deal with the
barbarians’ and they all fled. And you know what happened to the ones who chose to
stay. We scared the hell out of them.” Laughter and everyone was back to their phones.

My friend asked if we could visit the church in the morning. “I have no idea! All I know is,
there was a house up the hill. One of my cousins wanted to buy and turn it into a
restaurant. He told me that there was an Armenian guy living there. … the owner tells
everyone to leave him alone until he passes away. … So I am not sure how welcoming,
if anybody is still praying in that church, would they be? I don’t think there would be any
hostilities at all but you never know what experience they have had in this town!” I said.

My friend, told me, “You are right. Let’s not go there. After a five or ten-minute-drive, my
cousin parked in front of another old stone house. It looked like an old barn, at first.
Then we noticed that it was some sort of an exterior room of a bigger house. A
stovepipe was coming out through the window. One of the shopkeepers was putting
wood in the stove. Inside was all smoky. Despite the smoke, we entered as my cousin
convinced us that that place was among the best in town.

We left the restaurant after an hour. Some of us lit a cigarette outside. While we
were all standing there, my friend asked me, “Can you read that?” He pointed out the
stone tablet right above the old door of the bigger building. “I sure can, but I probably do
not know what it means. It must be Ottoman Turkish or a prayer in Arabic,” I replied.
However, I was embarrassed because I could not have read it. Some of the letters were gone and it had been more than five years since I last read an Arabic text. I struggled. Nothing. I asked my cousins who knew Arabic better than I did. He could not have read it, either. We kept looking at the stone and wondered what was carved on it.

Before we left, my friend stared at the stone one more time and said, “Such a shame. I do not think there is any other nation that would be more alienated to their past than we are now. We pass by this beautiful old building and cannot even read this single carving. Who knows what it tells? Not only here. In Istanbul, I am surrounded by history. Yet, I have little knowledge. If they taught us how to read the Ottoman Turkish, we would be in peace with our past. We are alienated to our own surrounding yet we call it our land.” “Yes. Maybe in a few years they decide to teach Ottoman Turkish as an elective” I replied. Later, Tayyip Erdogan came with the highly debated idea of teaching Ottoman Turkish in elementary schools.

On the New Year’s day of 2015 he and I clearly agreed that Ottoman Turkish could have been taught in public schools that would allow people to reconcile with the space and time dimensions of their lives. However, I was disturbed by Erdogan’s proposal. Like most of my friends, I was worried about the changing tone of politics in the country. The proposed change could have helped people get rid of the collective amnesia Turks are considered to suffer from. Yet, the tone the proposal was made so many people think twice about the ‘real intentions of the change.’ Bringing back history might not be always “innocent,” we all agreed.

The Ottoman era, the institution of the Caliphate, or the coexistence of different ethnic groups in current Turkey was among the dominant pasts or futures people
yearned for. Although they were not so many conversations during which the only dominant topic we talked about could be classified as ‘yearning for the past’ or ‘nostalgia,’ it was almost ubiquitous that every single individual I talked to were apparently nostalgic for a ‘change’ or a ‘different form of Self.’ It would be misleading if I end my stories here as it only gives one side of the overall picture. Until now, the picture seems to be that during my fieldwork, I only had access to accounts of nostalgia for the Ottoman past or a past/future shaped with a priority given to the Muslim/Ottoman identity. There were various individuals who desired extreme political and military measures to return the country back to the early years of the Republic. They wanted “the” Turkey that once achieved “full independence, self-help economy, higher level of education, higher level of gender equality, and a society more tolerant to differences.”

In Istanbul, an eighty-year-old retired teacher told me, “You [those getting education in the West] will hopefully bring us back the old days. We need people with good culture and with modern perspective. Now, you walk on the street and see a bunch of reckless, rude, ugly youngsters who do not know how to behave in public. Half of them speak in English or sing in English on the streets. What happened to your beautiful language? Ignorant! Giving up your own language doesn’t civilize you. Learn English or French properly and use it in, you tell me, the Court … The European Court of Human Rights to defend your country. In my youth, we at least know how to behave in public and were aware of some good manners. Good manners bring prosperity. Because a well behaving generation knows the proper way at school, at work, at home, and at public places. This Republic needs another republican generation. And it needs that immediately!”
Nostalgia was constant. There were different types of nostalgia for different pasts and futures. Yet, almost each and every individual account encompassed the feeling of ‘missing’ or ‘yearning.’ However, what does this have to do with representation of the Other? How is it related to demarcations between the Self and the Other ordinary Turks construct? If being nostalgic is a permanent human act or if we all keep our pasts alive what makes the nostalgic Turks, I described above, important to understand the dynamics of representation of the? The answer lies partially within what Nostalgia is and what purposes a nostalgic discourse or state of being serves, and partially in what kind of context the yearning takes place.

**Yearning for the Future and Yearning for the Self**

Since the early stages of my research, I worked on different outlines of this dissertation. I changed the titles, combined one trend of representation of the Other with another, decided to omit one of the trends, and postponed writing on an idea since I did not have much information on it. Yet, one chapter or one theme has always stayed in each and every outline I prepared. Nostalgia was what I had on my mind since my pilot study. At first, I had no clue what to do with it. “Yes. People miss the past. They want a different future. But first they want to change the present. So what? Aren’t we all the same?” I ridiculed myself so many times but never gave up on the stories of nostalgia. There was something very attractive and disturbing in those stories. Something that I really wanted to write about.

When I first shared my idea of Nostalgia and representation of the Other, my initial thought was: “Nostalgia is in fact a form othering. The present is othered and a different future is desired for a ‘better’ future.” I included this brief description in one of the memos I shared with my supervisor. During one of our meetings, Dr. Oren gave my
outline back with some remarks on it. The summary of the chapter on nostalgia and representation of the Other had one comment that really made me concerned. Briefly, it said that nostalgia by definition was othering the present, so what was the point of writing such a chapter? Consequently, I asked, “Should I give up the idea?” However, the stories I noted down had something more than that. They pointed out to a more complex relationship between the Self and the Other, and among the present, the future and the past. A complexity that I was not able to formulate in my outline but that I could have only comprehended and explained with the help of the literature on Nostalgia.

I started with what Nostalgia is about. One of the initial ‘facts’ that I noticed was that Nostalgia was ‘academically’ a predominantly post-soviet or Eastern European phenomenon. Erstwhile Other of the West or the Other side of the Cold War was the main case study of nostalgia (See i.e. Berdahl 1999, Boyer 2006, 2010, Ekman and Linde 2005, Todorova and Gille 2010). After reading a few studies on Nostalgia, I started to skip the beginnings of the books and articles because almost all of them start with brief account of the history and etymology of the word “Nostalgia” (Todorova 2010, 2). The popular ‘story’ of nostalgia is as the following:

Enter the epidemiology of nostalgia. In his remarkable 1688 medical dissertation for the University of Basel, Johannes Hofer coined the term *nostalgia* by combining two Greek terms—nostos (the return home) and algos (grief)—to identify a pathological variant of the common condition known to his contemporaries simply *Heimweh* (homesickness) (Hofer 1934, 380-381) (1934: 380-381). Hofer’s diagnosis, gathered under the term *nostalgia*, this signals both grief and obsession with a return to the place of origin. Nostalgia concerns the autophagous desire to deny the truth of the presently returning to a source. For Hofer, this source was explicitly *Heimat* (home) and nation—his medical analysis of nostalgia was humoral and climatological and centered on the aggravation of mental spirits and fibers.
acclimated to a certain territory when the afflicted undertook extended travel (note that “extended” travel in Hofer’s lifeworld could mean 50km or even less). The afflicted, meanwhile, could only be cured by returning to their native climate (Boyer 2010, 18).

The origin of nostalgia was one point that most of the scholars agreed. Still, there were exceptions such as what algos means. For instance, in her widely cited study, Boym indicates that Nostalgia is the combination of nostos-return to home and algia-longing (not “grief”) and is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed (2001, XIII Emphasis added). Or, algos meant pain not grief or longing according to other scholars (see i.e. Peters 1985).

Like the concept of paranoia, I discussed in my second chapter, once again I found myself dealing with a contested concept originated from the discipline of medicine. It was not very surprising. In fact, in an unofficial dissertation discussion group, once I was asked the following question: “What is your level of analysis?” And my answer was, “individual.” Considering the fact that I focus on individual stories, it might not be a coincidence to use concepts that disciplines focusing on the ‘individual’ commonly use. One thing that was not surprising either was that although the term nostalgia originated from medicine, it was quite obvious, as my chapter also suggests, “the study of nostalgia did not belong to any specific discipline. “It frustrates psychologists, sociologists, literary theorists, and philosophers—even computer scientists who thought they had gotten away from it all until they took refuge in their home pages and cyber-pastoral vocabulary of the global village” (Boym 2001, 11).

As most of us know whenever a term is adopted by different disciplines, its meaning becomes blurry and often contested. That is why I was not really surprised that
I found myself in a cloud of definitions. They were signs designating the everyday use of the term, summarizing necessary conditions for nostalgia to emerge, or socio-economic characteristics of individuals or societies who were ‘more prone to suffer from nostalgia.’

The first group of articles I read about nostalgia was empirical analyses. Their common purpose was to find out whether the impact of nostalgia on individual psychology was positive or negative and what the purpose of nostalgia was. For instance, in their study focusing on Turkey, having concluded that “identities are subjectively available to individuals and groups through the self-narratives that they author, that these narratives variously support, undermine and compete for hegemony,” Brown and Humphreys (2002) argues “that nostalgia plays important roles in shaping and constraining roles in identity-dynamics.” In other studies, it is mainly argued that “Nostalgia indeed functions as a positive resource for the self or “it is predominantly a positive, self-relevant, and social emotion serving key psychological functions” (Vess et al. 2010) or “nostalgia is a predominantly positive, self-relevant, and social emotion serving key psychological functions (Sedikides et al. 2008). I noted down, “identity-dynamics, and positive resource for construction of the self” after reading these studies.

I continued with articles and books that discussed what Nostalgia meant. I had never looked up the word in the dictionary. I had a meaning for the term on my mind: Yearning for the past. However, an article titled “Communist Nostalgia and the Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe” brought the everyday use of the term to my attention. These definitions were helpful before I started to read further discussions on the term because they clarified what ‘I’ had in my mind when I used the term nostalgia. “According to Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the
English Language, nostalgia could be either ‘a severe melancholia caused by protracted absence from home or native place’ or ‘a wistful or excessively sentimental sometimes abnormal yearning for return to or return of some real or romanticized period or irrecoverable condition or setting in the past (Ekman and Linde 2005, 356). In everyday language, however, the authors argued, the concept seems to indicate more than a mere sentimental longing for he good old days. Also, it arguably carries connotations of something not quite genuine, a selective image of the past, sometimes cast in a conservative or even reactionary form (356). It was becoming clearer. Longing for a home, genuinely native, good days, or selectively remembered past was at the core of nostalgia. I was quite right in defining the core of what nostalgia meant and other scholars had similar conclusions.

“Despite the word’s changing connotations since the seventeenth century, there remains one indisputable, albeit banal, feature of nostalgia upon which we all agree, from those who reflected on casually on the phenomenon to those who have studies it closely. This is that the material of nostalgic experience is the past” (Davis 1977, 415-416). I highlighted these sentences with content that my train of thought was on the right direction. However, the following sentences of the author made me put my first question mark on my research notebook. The author continued his discussion on the commonly agreed definition of nostalgia as the following: “Moreover, the weight of subjective testimony seems to suggest that the past which is the object of nostalgia must in some fashion be a personally experienced past rather than one drawn solely from, for example, chronicles, almanacs, history books, memorial tablets or, for that matter,
legend (416). “Damn it!” I wrote on the article saved on my e-reader. Although the author gave me the clue that I was on the right direction by concluding that nostalgia … is deeply implicated in our sense of who we are, what we are about … In short, nostalgia is one of the means—or better yet, a readily, accessible psychological lens—at our disposal for the never-ending work of constructing, maintaining and reconstructing our identities. Nostalgia, therefore, is implicated importantly in the continuities and discontinuities we experience in our sense of self (Davis 1977, 419-420).

Most of the stories I collected in the field referred to a past that was not personally experienced by my interlocutors. If nostalgia required that the past people long for had to be lived experiences, could I really talk about a case of nostalgia among my interlocutors? I could give up or search whether there was a consensus on this point among other scholars. Reading further on the issue, my worries on the validity of my case of nostalgia proved wrong that there was no clear consensus in the necessity of the “lived experiences” in the definition of nostalgia. Yearning for the past or a home was the constant, not the “lived” or “personally” experienced.

I had so many other books and articles on my computer, on my e-reader, in my apartment and in my tiny study-room at the library on campus. But one morning, I woke and just typed “nostalgia politics” on Google. Then I opened some other tabs on my web browser to read, first, some Turkish newspapers, then New York Times, and finally the articles from countless online sources on my Facebook newsfeed. After setting my web browser for my morning routine of reading, I walked back to the kitchen for a cup of coffee. Within a minute or so, I was back at my table staring at the screen. I was in between replying my e-mails or reading. “Maybe neither!” I searched for Goodbye Lenin! on Netflix. Boyer’s article, “Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern
Germany” (2006) reminded me of that movie. I had watched that movie while I was in college, but I thought it was a movie that deserved to be seen more than once. Yet, on that day, marginal utility of $12.99, which I had to pay to watch it online, was higher than the pleasure/guilt of watching that movie at the expense of postponing writing these pages. So I get back to the web browser tab where my Google search of “Nostalgia politics” was waiting for me.

The second result on my Google search page was: “History and the Politics of Nostalgia” by Piaison Natali (2004). The article was quite interesting. I noted down various scholars the author referred to. But more importantly, I noted down the name of the journal it was published Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies. Frankly speaking, if the name of the journal started with an ‘Ivy’ name, I would have paid more attention. Yet, still I checked the issue the article was published a few days after. It was good that I did not ignore the journal. In fact, I noticed that I had noted down the journal but ignored it quite a while. Todorova (2010, 2), later I found among my little cue cards, referred to the introductory article of the issue by Scanlan (2004) in her introduction to Post-Communist Nostalgia. I downloaded and read the entire fifth issue of the Journal but found the introductory article as the most useful for my chapter.

In his article, “Introduction: Nostalgia,” Sean Scanlan provides a concise account of Nostalgia. First of all, in Todorova’s words (2010, 2), “Sean Scanlan reminds us (in the special issue of Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies dedicated to nostalgia, and featuring pieces on rock music, history, film, African American, American Indian and émigré literature), nostalgia is no longer treated as the programmatic equivalent of bad memory, as a social disease (Susan Stewart), the abdication of memory (Christopher
Lasch), or the symptom/cause of the rifts between historical signifiers and their
signifieds (Frederic Jameson). He asks “is [Nostalgia] a replacement or substitute for
the important terms that inform it: memory or history or forgetting?” (Scanlan 2004, 4). I
noted down the following key words again, “history, memory, forgetting.” I remembered
my previous note on “selective history/past.” Then, I wrote down the following on my
research notebook: “If it is memory that play role in nostalgia, then “lived experience” is
not necessarily a condition for nostalgia to appear. ‘Social memory,’ that can be
transferred from generation to generation can be considered as ‘lived’ as the individual
experiences.”

After reading Scanlan’s article, I took another look at the cue card I prepared
while reading Post-Communist Nostalgia (Todorova and Gille 2010). I had a scheme
drawn on the paper: Two types of Nostalgia. One was “Restorative Nostalgia” and the
other was “Reflective Nostalgia.” Although I did not clearly remember, the citation note
on the card referred to page 215 which belonged to Murav’s (2010) chapter in the edited
volume.

I rechecked the Murav’s chapter and downloaded Boym’s essay Nostalgia and its
Discontents (2007), which was an adoption from her book The Future of Nostalgia
(Boym 2001). I quickly read her essay and then took the bus to borrow her book from
the library.

The first sentence that took my attention in Boym’s book was the following, “A
contemporary Russian saying claims that the past has become much more
unpredictable than the future. Nostalgia depends on this strange unpredictability” (2001,
xiv). That was very related to my field work notes. There were various accounts of
history. People were clearly referring to diverging ‘histories’ and this was making my fieldwork experiences unpredictable in the sense that I was not sure who would refer to ‘which history’ and when. Then, I highlighted the following sentence: “The danger of nostalgia is that it tends to confuse the actual home and imaginary one” (2001, xvi). Yet, I pretty much ignored this idea. In other words, I did not agree with it as I already opposed the distinction between the real and the imagined. Moreover, earlier I argued that what my interlocutors imagine is their reality. Finally, in her introduction I highlighted, “Nostalgia is not always about the past” and “Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the planes of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of the groups or nations, between personal and collective memory” (2001, xvii). Boym’s ideas were supporting the notion that nostalgia was a yearning for the past in the service of shaping the present and the future. Moreover, her emphasis on the relationship between the individual and collective memory was related to my concern about the necessity of the presence of lived experiences for a notion to be called Nostalgia. Her idea clearly implied that social memory, which is (selectively) transferred from generation to generation, was a crucial component of understanding nostalgia.

Boym states that she is not interested in the nostalgia that is merely an individual sickness but she is interest in nostalgia that is a symptom of our time (2001, 2007). And concerning this she argues three crucial points:

First, nostalgia is not “antimodern;” it is not necessarily opposed to modernity but coeval with it. Nostalgia and progress are (…) doubles and mirror images of one another. Nostalgia is not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space… Second, nostalgia appears to be a longing for a place, but it is
actually a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms or our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebelling against the modern idea of times, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desire to turn history into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition. Hence the past of nostalgia, to paraphrase William Faulkner, is not even past. (...) Third, nostalgia, in my view, is not always retrospective; it can be prospective as well. The fantasies of the past determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future. The consideration of the future makes us take responsibility of our nostalgic tales. (...) While futuristic utopia might be out of fashion, nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension—only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes it is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways. (2001, 2007).

For Boym, “outbreaks of nostalgia often follow revolutions; the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution, and the “Velvet” revolutions in Eastern Europe were accompanied by political and cultural manifestations of longing” (2001, 2007). And these nostalgic sentiments, related to the third crucial point I summarized above, are two types: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia stresses nostos (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home. Reflective nostalgia thrives on algia (the longing itself) and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately (Boym 2001, 13). This distinction was the reason I started reading Boym’s studies. Yet, I discovered about nostalgia more than I was looking for. I thought, her emphasis on longing for a different time, not necessarily for a space, was crucial in understanding nostalgia I came across during my fieldwork. Yet, I was not sure how typology of nostalgia was really relevant to my study.

She later discusses that “Restorative nostalgia is at the core of recent national and religious revivals. It knows two main plots—the return to origins and the conspiracy.
Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones (2007, 13). “National and religious revival,” “return the origins,” and “conspiracy” were added to my research notes. I had already started reading studies on Turkey and nostalgia. National and religious revivals were among the points that were discussed. Moreover, conspiracy was not really a term I, or this study, was alien to.

Finally, a point Boym stressed in her essay, I thought, might have helped me understand or interpret the stories from my fieldwork: Secularization of time. Secularization, as a term, has always been a ‘catchy’ concept for those who study Turkey or Turkish society—if you can separate them at all. “So, why not fall prey to the common trend?” I murmured after I read the following argument:

There is a perception that as a result of society’s industrialization and secularization beginning in the nineteenth century, a certain void of social and spiritual meanings has opened up. What is needed is a secular transformation of “fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning.” [Footnote 10]. But this transformation can take different turns. It may increase the emancipatory possibilities and individual choices, offering multiple “imagined communities” and means of belonging, which are not exclusively based on ethnic or national principles (2007).

I summarized what I learned from Boym’s discussions on a piece of paper with a:

“Nostalgia does not have to be about lived experiences. Social memory is or can be what nostalgia about. The past is unpredictable and people selectively remember the past or are taught about it. There can be two forms of nostalgia; one is yearning for a different time or a HOME (I wrote it in capital letters) and the other is about the act of yearning itself. It can be somehow related to the process of secularization and changes in the codes of ethics in the society or the public space.” “Home?” I asked myself. “I
should dig into this!” I told myself. But before that, I had so many other studies on nostalgia I wanted to go through.

I maintained my research momentum with Peters’s article, “Reflections on the Origins and Aim of Nostalgia” (1985). Considering nostalgia as a universal or archetypical experience the author argues that in yearning for a home, all parts of one’s self is involved in the nostalgic emotions (1985, 137). Unlike the rest of the studies, the author refer to nostalgia as an emotion that individual do not want to feel (1985, 135). And unlike other studies I had read, the author was interested in the concept of home, which he roughly defines as “the unknown” (1985, 137). My curiosity in the concept of ‘home’ was not in vain, I thought. I was not able to fully formulate my thought. Yet, I was playing with the words: “nostalgia, home, yearning, self, and identity.” I postponed my thinking over these words for another day or two until I finished reading the files I saved in my nostalgia research folder.

One of the articles I later read argued “nostalgia has numerous manifestations and cannot be reduced to a singular or absolute definition. Its meaning and significance are multiple, and should be seen as accommodating progressive, even utopian impulses as well as regressive stances …” (Pickering and Keightley 2006). Instead of defining what nostalgia means, the authors suggest that “Rather than dismissing it as a concept, we should perhaps configure it in terms of a distinction between the desire to return to an earlier state or idealized past, and the desire not to return but to recognize aspects of the past as the basis for renewal and satisfaction in the future. Nostalgia can then be seen as not only a search for ontological security in the past, but also as a means of taking one’s bearings for the road ahead in the uncertainties of the present”
This argument suggests that nostalgia is not simply an act of yearning to achieve a future based on a point of reference in the past, but constructing a sense of security through the good virtues of a self from the past.

Another study referred to the concept of ‘home.’ The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia edited by Chase and Shaw starts with the idea what nostalgic people ‘in fact’ misses. The authors argues that “the home that we miss is no longer a geographically defined place but rather a state of mind” (1989, 1). After defining what people long for as a state of mind, the authors further argue for necessary conditions for nostalgia to be present in a society. These prerequisites are a secular and linear sense of time, an apprehension of the failings of the present, and the availability of evidences of the past. Fort the authors, although these conditions do not form an exhaustive list, they provide a base from which the specificities of more particular nostalgic forms can be explored (1989, 2). In addition to these necessary conditions, the authors argue that “certain classes or strata within a society (especially whose situation has changed for the worse) are likely to experience a more public and collective nostalgia (1989, 15). “Collective nostalgia?”, I noted down.

With that question on mind and my curiosity about the concept of ‘home,’ I started to read another study. The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction by Marangoly George. Although the main chapters of the book were not very related to my research, the author’s two ideas were very inspiring and shaped my argument about nostalgia. On the very first page of her book, the author argues “The word “home” immediately connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nurture and protection” (1996, 1). I
was excited because I thought that I found the missing part to formulate my excitement about the stories of nostalgia. And my confidence increased after I read the author’s second brief argument on the concept of home: “Home is way of establishing difference (1996, 2).

Boyer’s argument was more meaningful after reading George’s introduction. “In the postmedical era of nostalgia … we confront a less corporeal notion of grief and obsession. Also, a less territorialized one—today, nostalgia most often appears discursively not as a search for a place, a home or nation, but as a sociotemporal yearning for a different stage or quality of life (2010, 18), for different differences or securities of the ‘self’. Although I do not agree with his conclusions that “the term nostalgia only resonates when two criteria have been met: when there is no chance of going back and when improvement is evident,” (2010, 37), I believe his following argument is adequate to have a general understanding of nostalgia: “It is common to consider nostalgia as a descriptive, evaluative, or even, analytical practice; in other words, as a way of grappling with the presence of the (external) world through a past-oriented medium of expression. But nostalgia is also an indexical practice, a mode of inhabiting the lived world through defining oneself situationally and positionally in it (2010, 21). I do not think that lack of any chance of going back is a necessary condition for nostalgia to resonate. In fact, it is the idea or hope of, at least, awakening some parts of the past is what makes nostalgia alive. If there is no hope for returning home, at least there must be relevance of applying the virtues of the past to the present or the future. His second argument, which resembles the style of my dissertation, mystory and chorography, points out individuals’ meaning-making through their lived experiences or
surrounding world, which gives nostalgia the “human” aspect or adds the agent into the picture as the interpretive power. This, as the agent is added to the picture, requires us considering or at least paying attention to the role of values and Boyer reminds us that “accusations and embraces of nostalgia are never value neutral” (2010, 21).

Reading more on the relationship on identity and nostalgia, especially on the experience of displacement (Milligan 2003), I wanted to clarify my thoughts on the nostalgia as missing a home, seeking security, or creating/strengthening a ‘self.’ My guiding statement was: “Home is way of establishing difference” (George 1996, 2). Home is a source of identity or a socio-cultural and physical space to be shaped in accordance with the identities.

There was an essay saved on my desktop named Said & “Edward.” I hardly remembered when or why I downloaded it. But I thought it must have something to do with one of my ongoing researches. The essay was: "Said & "Edward:" Dispossession and Overcoming Nostalgia" by Lemert (2005). It was definitely about my ongoing research. That brief discussion of Said’s work on dispossession was about ‘home;’ the concept that I was planning to formulize my thoughts about.

On the third page of his essay, Lemert (2005 Emphasis added) writes,

“Dispossession from one’s homeland turns a people into refugees—emotionally and socially. Said was of the few since Frantz Fanon in Wretched of the Earth (1962) to give account of the inextricable complications between the subjective and objective that modern, European culture took for granted. The modern world was (or is, as the case may be) a world in which, in principle at least, everyone had a right to a home, if not a house. Modernity was the culture of social space—the space of territorially defined nation-state, the space of exploration and colonization, the space of new frontiers for new conquests, the space of future time…"
Citing Said’s *Out of Place*, whose purpose the author defines as “less to write of the importance of his personal beginnings than to use them to the end of illuminating the importance of the Palestinian troubles of his homeland,” Lemert (2005), brilliantly shows how spaces and possessions build up inside of us shaping who we are and where we belong to. One of Lemert’s citations from *Out of Place* is worth sharing:

“Out of Place is a record of an essentially lost or forgotten world. Several years ago I received what seemed to be fatal medical diagnosis, and it therefore struck me as important to leave behind a subjective account of the life I lived in the Arab world, where I was born and spent my formative years, and in the United States where I went to school, college, and university. Many of these places and people I recall here no longer exist, though I found myself frequently amazed at how much I carried of them inside me in often minute, even startling concrete, detail” (Said 1999, ix).

Here, Said, whose aforementioned words I did not pay close attention when I read it more than a year ago, clearly designates how his changing environment and its content had always been with him. That is why Lemert must have considered the purpose of *Out of Place* as the illustration of Said’s dispossessed home and dispossessed identity or Palestine and being Palestinian. Yet, more important than this, Said writes: “The underlying motifs for me have been the emergence of a second self buried for a very long time beneath a surface of often expertly acquired the wielded social characteristics belonging to the self my parent tried to construct, the “Edward” I speak of intermittently, and how extraordinarily increasing number of departures have unsettled my life from its earliest beginnings. To me, nothing more painful and paradoxically sought after characterizes my life than the many displacements from countries, cities, abodes, languages, environments that have kept me in motion all these years” (1999, 217).
As Lemert (2005) argues, Said is, evidently, describing the effects of his personal displacements in the formation of the second self he excavated from under the ruins. It is clear that our home(s) or the spaces we are or try to be a member of can well construct, at least, part of the self. I do not argue for a causal relationship in which spaces define one’s identities. It is rather a constitutive relationship as spaces can be (re)constructed in accordance with one’s (ideal) self.

Think about the professor, who asked me where I was from after a professional conference and whose questions dramatically changed upon my response that I was from Turkey. Why? Why does it matter where someone is from?

Could I choose to be homeless? I guess, I could not.

“If home is where a person is from, then not to be from anywhere in particular is to suffer a terrible fate in a culture that values the conquest of social space as much as modernity has. The colonizing ambitions of the masters of modern world are not limited to the taking of lands lives for economic gain (…) the personal world in which we live, our lifeworld, is continuously at risk of being colonized (…). More specifically, in the modern lifeworld, the social space in which one lives is a way of saying who she is” (Lemert 2005).

“Home is a way of saying who she is,” and “Home is a way of creating differences/similarities.” So, let’s think about nostalgia again. The basic definition of nostalgia that almost every scholar of nostalgia agrees is that it is longing for a home. It is the desire to turn to home or to a specific time in that past during which the characteristics of the physical and socio-cultural space one’s ‘self’—which can be the broader self or society one affiliates with—used to live is the main (abstract) object that a nostalgic yearns for. The self and the Other could create a tension and in these situations identities go through changes to accommodate the tension rising from the
blurry or inconsistent boundaries between the self and the Other. I believe, this is also the case between the self and the home, hence between the other and the home—which should be regarded as the reflection of the self. Hence, nostalgia can or should be regarded as yearning for a different self or different dynamics of the relationship between the self and the Other.

It is certainly seeking what was once possessed. It is the desire to re-acquire the dispossessed identities, spaces, or meaning or characteristics of ‘home.’ It can be the desire to awaken an imagined Muslim state in which each and every Muslim is thought to live peacefully, to create an international system where Muslims are thought to be represented by a strong authority or leader, to bring back the homeland that was once the land of the modern, tolerant, and secular citizens, or to bring back the old social gatherings during which women, like my mother, used to have their public/private realm of entertainment. Yet, no matter what or how and individual yearns for, it is certainly another ‘self’—as specific as a ‘women who is socializing’ not ‘woman who is campaigning for a political party’ or as general as a Turk who could make more sense of stone tablet on the door of an old house.

**Homeless Bastards: Yearning for ‘Home at Home’ and ‘Home in the World’**

I found it quite fascinating how much ‘nostalgia’ had been used in order to explain the current (identity) situation the Turkey. My fascination was not because nostalgia was an ill-fitting concept for the dynamics of the Turkish ‘identity market,’ but how people’s relationship was mainly fixated on the practice of forgetting, but not remembering. Moreover, most of the studies, referring to ‘Turkish nostalgia,’ had very little—if any—clarification of what nostalgia meant.
There were two main premises that the scholars writing on nostalgia in Turkish society seemed to have signed a secret accord to use somehow. The first one was, “Turkey has a troubling relationship with its past” (see i.e. Kechriotis 2012, Suner 2011). And the second one is, “Turkey has been considered as an archetype of social amnesia but since 1990s this has been in a constant change” (see i.e. Bakiner 2013, Ozyurek 2007, Bilmez 2013). As Suner (2011) briefly summarizes: “It is a widely held opinion that social memory in Turkey is based on forgetting and denial, that is, Turkish society deals with the troubling events in its past by turning blind eye to them.”

In my previous chapters, I discussed the impacts of official discourse or state apparatuses—with the overwhelming power of Kemalist ideology—in shaping the lives, identities, minds, and memories of the citizens in the process of creating a ‘new’ modern nation separated from their Ottoman heritage. This process, according to Kadioglu, was an ‘engineered oblivion’, which has made the society ignorant concerning not only its Ottoman past, but also the ‘multi-religious and multi-ethnic history of the land that they inhabit’ (2007, 289). The first figure in the broader picture of the nostalgic Turk: The modern nation-state project shaping individual lives, was in front of me, at the very beginning of so many studies. “Same old same old” I repeated each and every time I read an article or a book on Turkish nostalgia.

Although state-sponsored social memory in Turkey was all about forgetting the past, the Ottoman heritage survived in the Turkish popular culture, in popular stories and entertainment, and in intellectual, especially literary works (Colak 2006, 591). Yet, the presence of the supposedly repressed past must have been either as not explicit as today or not taken into account as a matter of academic concern as it has been...
recently, Otherwise, it would have been a logical fallacy to talk about a revival of
Ottoman history. In fact, although the ‘administered forgetting’ (Ozyurek 2007, 3-6)
made ‘certain historical interpretations’ stay outside the public space, it is quite obvious,
nowadays, that individuals have always kept ‘the past’ related to their identities and
transferred it across generations (Bilmez 2013). That is why the liberal or 'liberating'
policies of 1990s created the space for those alternative accounts of affiliation to appear
in the public.

Since the early 1990s, Turkey has been undergoing an explosion of memory
novelists, screenwriters, members of the legal profession, politicians, and of course
ordinary citizens have been striving to recover pasts both real and imagined. Movies,
 novels, and TV series trigger debates on Ottoman wars of conquest, sixteenth-century
palace life, everyday life in the tumultuous Balkans in the late nineteenth century, the
private life of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and the legacy of youth political mobilization in the
1970s” (Bakiner 2013, 696 Emphasis added). The explosion of social memories
alternating the state ideology was first ignited in early 1990s. The increasing integration
of local economy with the international market, emergence of private media as
alternative sources to state television channels and means of political contestation, and
the impact of external institutions such as World Bank or International Monetary Forum,
created an environment in which individuals found a larger space of maneuver to
(re)emphasize their affiliations publicly—or politically (Keyman 1995, Ozyurek 2006,
Colak 2006). This revival in the early 1990s marked a crisis of re-introduction of the
mostly oppressed identities in the middle of the Turkish socio-political life (Bozdoğan
This has turned Turkey into an environment of nostalgia, especially among those whose Islamic identities or Ottoman affiliations were forced to stay in private spaces and for the Kemalists who strive to reverse the momentum of Islamic identities in finding space in the public realm.

What is this nostalgic culture all about? Or what is nostalgic about the contestation of identities in Turkey? In fact, the literature on nostalgia in Turkey is quiet on this. Yet, let me summarize the implicit in the literature briefly while I try not to bore you by repeating the ‘impact of the Kemalist discourse on individuals’ life’ or ‘same old same old.’

Ozyurek, who has various studies on public memory and regards Turkey as a unique case to help us understand the relationship between public memory and the past (2007, 2), is one of the well-known scholars of social memory in Turkey. In her study that combines her personal experiences and academic research, she writes, “although I could not make much sense of these new development taking place in my parents’ or friends’ lives …, I soon realized that it was not only the Islamists who changes but also secularist citizens like themselves, devoted to early Republican principles, who were transforming the way they experiences and displayed their ideological commitments (2006, 2). She indicates that while Islamists were (re)introducing religious identity in the public sphere, the secularists or republican identity were being kept alive in the private lives. She points out series of changes that have been affecting the ordinary life in Turkey. For some these were positive changes and some, like my mother, did not welcome these. Particularly interested in the republican or Kemalist nostalgia, Ozyurek writes, “The growing nostalgia culture has often manifested itself in the form of a longing
for the early decades of the Republic, most notably the 1930s—the authoritarian single party-era” (2006, 2).

Focusing more on the macro dynamics of economy, particularly neoliberal economy, Ozyurek is mostly interested in the interaction between consumption and nostalgia. More specifically, she argues that nostalgia and privatization are among the powerful driving forces behind neoliberal ideology, which turns objects, relations, and concepts into commodities and transforms political expression by converting it to an issue of personal interest (2006, 8). The changes in the economy and their impact on people’s yearning have been discussed especially for Post-Soviet context. Therefore, Ozyurek’s explanation of Turkish nostalgia finds theoretical and empirical support in the literature. However, as her approach leaves little or no room for people’s need of identification or nostalgia as an issue of ‘searching for a home’ or ‘affiliation,’ she undermines the core of what nostalgia is.

In Turkey, nostalgia for ‘a past’ or yearning for a different home has been mostly about the identities people were not able to, even, acknowledge, due to the state monopoly over people’s identity. Although not unique to Turkish case, history has been highly politicized. With the increase of personal liberties since 1990s—or with the loosen power of Kemalist elite’s monopoly over the ‘officially’ sanctioned role model citizen—people started to live in accordance with the alternative histories they used to keep alive in their private lives. Neyzi’s “Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity, and Subjectivity in Turkey” (2002) and Igsiz’s “Documenting the Past and Publicizing Personal Stories: Sensescapes and the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population
Exchange in Contemporary" (2008) form an interesting dyad of articles to understand the re-emergence of alternative histories that used to be kept in private decades.

The way these articles talk to each other first was not very clear to me. One day I shared the starting story Neyzi’s article with a friend of mine. My friend’s family was forced to leave Bulgaria—during the population exchange, which I briefly mentioned in my previous chapter as one of the state policies for homogenizing the population in Turkey—and started a life in central Anatolia where they had to “change a lot” such as giving up pork products. “My parents used to eat pork in Bulgaria. But they couldn’t any more. Firstly, because it was not available in Yozgat [A town in Central Anatolia]. Secondly, it was not religiously or culturally accepted”, he told me. And this change, according to my friend, was a taboo that should have never been shared with neighbors or relatives ‘who were originally from Turkey’ until very recently. He told me, “You guys are reading really interesting stuff. That article must be capturing my parents’ life well. Is Let me read it. Can you e-mail it to me?” His words were helpful for me. Although, the reason why my friend was allowed (not) to share her family’s past pork eating habit might be different than the reasoning in the story that an academic article started, he helped me to see the emergence of identities in real life.

Neyzi starts his article with the following real life story:

I was seven or eight years old. We were walking in Taksim [a neighborhood in Istanbul] with a close friend of my parents I called “aunt.” Accompanying us was an acquaintance of my aunt. There had been some kind of talk about where we were from. “We are from Salonica,” I declared with confidence. In my eyes, being from Salonica was no different than being from Istanbul. When we came home, my aunt pulled me aside. She said, “From now on, you will never say ‘I am from Salonica’ to someone you don’t know. This is very demeaning; people will look down upon you.” I started to cry,

“According to Fatma Arig, a fifty-one-year-old Turkish woman of Sabbatean heritage her search for the past began with this shock she recalls experiencing as a child,” Neyzi (2002, 137) writes. And she continues, “Her quest was fulfilled by way of history, for lack of memory” (2002, 137). The rest of the article, although interesting, did not leave as much impact as this very striking introduction did on me. A child having been pulled aside—for some reason, later my memory added a slap on this little child’s face—and instructed not to mention her identities to strangers was quite a vivid story to remember. That story was really unique in the sense that I met a lot of people—Kurdish, Jewish, Alevi, or Christian—in Turkey who were ‘commanded’ by their families not to mention ‘who in fact they were’ and who feel secure under certain condition in revealing ‘their true self.’ However, Fatma Arig’s story was more touching than the stories of my friends with ‘alternative identities’ were because, I thought, at least my friends were able to tell who in fact they were at an earlier stage of their life. None of them had to wait until the age fifty-one. Or I could not recall any of them being pulled aside and ‘slapped’ because they told a stranger where they were from. Anyways, having carved this story into my brain and heart, I later read Igsiz’s article (2008).

I downloaded Igsiz’s article because I was attracted to the key words “Publicizing Personal Stories.” In fact, I was not expecting it to be related to my research on nostalgia. Yet, Igsiz’s following sentences were definitely the summary of Fatma Arig’s story:

More recently, an increasing personalization of geography through familial attributes and memories became an anchor for self-identification in contemporary Turkey, traceable
through family history and personal narratives in the public domain. This shift in the way people engage with the past symptomatic of nostalgia for a traceable self-identification through family histories pursued to geographies of “origin” as opposed to the “administered forgetting” of such identification by nationalist ideologies. We can track this change over the last two decades in cultural products, such as documentary novels, memoirs, and family cookbooks, which have opened a space in the public domain to reconsider the past and to rewrite history at an individual level (2008, 451)

These two articles were among the most meaningful studies I read during my research. Their being influential in my understanding the nostalgic sentiments in Turkey or among my interlocutors was definitely not because they provided an analysis of a large-\(n\) dataset or supporting evidence for a clearly formulated hypothesis. Nor did they draw my attention because they were drawing a relationship between nostalgia and the changing dynamics of an economic system. Their focal point was the human. Lived experiences were their starting points. There was something breathing, aching, or simply humane in those articles. Like the stories I gathered in the field, they were alive. I could have found similarities between my interlocutors and the people in those articles. Still, to provide a better picture of nostalgia in Turkey, I, with the responsibilities a social scientist is expected to fulfill, advanced my research through various other studies.

One of the common understandings among various scholars was that in Turkey, individual memories regenerated connections or identities and reordered what is perceived as public culture. As a result, gradually, the state and its elites, the academic elites among them, began to lose their monopoly over the legitimacy to organize and interpret the past (Kechriotis 2012, 116). In other words, different interpretations of history, especially personal, emerged in the public space. This is not a surprising situation when a society’s relationship with its past considered. Bakiner (2013, 692-693)
indicates, “A society’s relationship to its past, embodied in widely shared (and contested) historical interpretations, is characterized by continuity as well as change across time and the striving for hegemony over the interpretations of the past has always coexisted with alternative memories that do not conform to dominant script”. It is, in other words, interpretations of the past are a contest over holding the status of hegemonic identity or who or what, in fact, the society is about. It is about “what/who is our traditional self?” It is well known that selective use of memories, silences (oblivion) and distorted or invented past stories (modern myths) have been playing key role in the nation building process in modern world history (Bilmez 2013). The (still ongoing) construction of the ‘Turkish Nation’ in the Turkish Republic exhibits a good example for this kind of politics of memory in the service of the nation-building process, as “Turkey is most shaped by its identity as a successor state to the collapsed Ottoman Empire (2013, 134) while people were ‘encouraged’ or, even, ‘forced’ to identify with the republican or Kemalist values that aimed to create a modern nation that forgets a specific version of its history.

With different interpretations of the history and struggle for hegemony over the identity of the public space, Turkey is a stage for different cases of nostalgia whose main objects of desire are different forms of ‘home’ with different ontologies. Each group or historical account is with its own agenda and struggle to find the space to claim their own individual origins, which, they hope, would alter their place in the Turkish society (Kechriotis 2012, 116). Today both individual and group identity becomes possible through claiming and remembering sameness over time and space (Ozyurek 2007, 11).. Hence, as Igsiz reminds us
While some scholars correctly explain the growing interest in nostalgia for the past through disillusionment with the present and future in Turkey (Neyzi 2002, 137-158, Ozyurek 2007, 2), it is also true that the “postmodern demand” for particularism and asking the question, “who are we?” seem to have caught up in contemporary Turkey as well (Bryant 2004, 5) (Igsiz 2008, 453).

In other words, Turkish Nostalgia or the stories from my fieldwork, are mainly about “Who are the Turks?” or “Whose home Turkey is?” To put differently, “Who do Turks exclude?” and “What are the abstract boundaries of our homeland?” Those ordinary people, I believe, struggle to answer, “Who is the ‘father’ of this home to speak for the household in the International arena?” And they search the answers in the history that should shape the present and future.

Although they do not particularly focus on the issue of identity and the relationship between the past and the future, there are scholars writing on Turkish nostalgia with reference to futures, or ‘homes,’ people yearn for. For instance, Aktar (2003) argues nostalgia, in Turkey, is at least in two forms: one for a pre-nation state “multi-culturalism” or diversity with the representation of different groups and the other is for a “homogenous” nation of the Muslim millet (an Ottoman identification system) of Turks in the geography of the nationalized territory. However, the above-mentioned questions, which I consider Turkish nostalgia is about, indicate multi-culturalism and a Muslim millet are only two possible futures people are nostalgic about. The picture is more than the issue of multi-culturalism versus homogenous Muslim society, or secular public space versus “post-secular public life” (Gokarıksel and Secor 2015).

One of the main issues, I believe, previous studies on nostalgia in Turkey undervalue is that nostalgia, at least how it emerges in Turkey, is a matter of yearning
for a home, a difference, a demarcating ontology between the Self and Other. Hence, isolating the issue of what is being yearned as a self from who the Other will inevitably be a myopic approach. The studies on Turkish nostalgia, mentions “ordinary individuals” (see i.e. Ozyurek 2006, Bakiner 2013, Gokaraksel and Secor 2015), even though they mostly focus on the macro level factors such as official discourse of the state or the oppression of identities by the Kemalist elite. Moreover, when their concern is the individual nostalgia, their analyses focus on how or why alternative histories emerge especially after early 1990s. I do not argue that these explanations lack plausibility or do not contribute to our understanding of the contemporary situation in Turkey. Yet, as my previous chapters suggest, these ordinary people who yearn for a past, hence a different future, are situated in a mindset that harbors different perceptions of who the Other is—that is popularly and misleadingly called paranoia—and maintain their perception of the self and Other within a discourse that resembles colonial discourse with self-Orientalizing attributes. Therefore, I believe, interpreting my stories of nostalgia by paying attention to the other components of othering—or defining the Self—will give us a better understanding of Turkish Nostalgia.

It would be unfair, if I do not mention that Ozyurek, with reference to two of the scholars I frequently cited in my previous chapter, mentions “Nostalgia plays [a specific] role in Turkey’s current relationship with Europe. Since the eighteenth century scholars have defied temporality, a constant sense of newness, as a central aspect of modernity. Contemporary scholarship has discussed the experience of alternative modernities in the non-West as a sense of repetition (Mitchell 2000) (Mitchell 2000), of lagging behind (Bhabha [1994] 2005), or longing for the future (Gole 2000)” (Ozyurek 2006, 10). Yet,
she does not advance this idea further while this idea of lagging behind or longing for
the future, I believe, should be an inseparable component of any account of Turkish
Nostalgia.

First of all, let me summarize what my interlocutors were nostalgic about. Hatice,
the college student I met in Kayseri, and Bulent, a retired imam that used to work in
Germany, were both nostalgic about a Turkey or land of Islam that resembled the
Ottoman Empire. The land of Islam they dreamt of might not have been as large as the
Ottoman lands, but the authority and the role the Ottoman Sultans or the Caliphate held
was definitely what they yearned for. They dream of a Muslim world unified by a
leader—ideally from the Turkish society as the rest of the Muslim states are the pawns
of the Western states. They wanted or tried to prove the necessity of a state with an
Islamic identity to stand still against the “Christian club.” They wanted a faster process
or “progress” towards rule within which individual liberties are assures and especially
under which the Muslim identity is kept outside the public space. They wanted a state
similar to the Ottoman Empire that would ensure that “the Muslims had a harbor to
anchor.” In short, they yearned for power; a power that would balance the international
system in the name of the Muslim world, in which the non-Muslim or the Christian world
is the Other.

My friend, and I, in the middle of our New Year’s celebration, yearned for a
country that was more tolerant towards its history and its multi-cultural demography. But
before everything, we dreamed of a society whose past was not politicized or a society
who would not have escaped from the knowledge hidden in the script craved on a stone
tablet hanging on the door of an old house. We yearned for the power of knowledge or
power of facing and embracing the past. The Kemalist ideology that excluded the traditional or forced people to forget the heterogeneity of identities in Anatolia, and the current politicians exploiting the identity dynamics in the country were out Others.

The retired teacher I met in Istanbul yearned for a generation that would have brought the good old days. Equipped with the right culture and right manners, the early generations of the republic had the power to modernize the country. That is what or whom the country needed, for him. The power of the ‘true young generation.’ The anti-Kemalists or any form of deviation from the modern ideology of the state was the Other.

No matter what the end we seek for or what type of history we all wanted to bring back, we all yearned for different sorts of power. Power of knowledge, power of a leader, power of a generation, or in short a powerful country. But power, I believe, was not the only object of nostalgia. As I mentioned, nostalgia in Turkey was, at least, towards a past of multi-culturalism that once created in the Ottoman Empire and also towards Muslim millet that would homogenize the population. Bulent and Hatice were nostalgic both of whom yearned for the Ottoman Empire where religious equality or to be more accurate, religious freedom for the minorities were guaranteed. Yet, both of them were also nostalgic for a state similar to the Ottoman Empire that should not leave the responsibilities of representing the Muslims in the international system to the other Muslim societies who are incompetent in ‘truly’ advocating the interests or well-being of the Muslims. For them, clearly, the Turks or Muslim Turks were more capable of reincarnating the ideal authority of caliphate than the rest of the Muslim world was. Moreover, the Turks were able to bring peace among different religions and the potential of a peaceful Turkish rule is still available. An Empire or trans-national rule
over the Muslims, as well as other religions, by the grandchildren of the Ottomans could be possible and ideal, they believed. In other words, Turks were and are still in the possession of superior traits—especially compared to other Muslim societies—in order to create balance and peace in the international system.

Personality of a society or state is also, I believe, another feature from the past that these exemplary stories define as an object that was yearned for. Comparing the West as a unified “Christian Club” and complaining about Turkish denial of the Ottoman heritage, these individuals were eager to achieve a future in which Turkey had a ‘clear identity’ or was true its own past. As I discussed, in my Chapter on colonial discourse and representation of the Other, Turks mostly regarded themselves as ‘the bastard in between the West and the East.’ Lack of a clear identity or belonging while having a past with a strong affiliation with Islam—at least as imagined by the people today—definitely encourage people to sympathize with the past and long for the return of the old glorious days. Rather than being in-between two worlds, they obviously opt for what once used to be the main demarcation of the past.

Most of these people live in a space that has multiple identities. Yet, the modernization or the construction of a new nation-state or homogenous society denied the existence of most of those identities. In a sense, people were forbidden to imagine communities while they were forced to imagine society that neither succeeded in belonging to the dreamed club nations nor completely freed itself from the ‘affiliations of the past.’ This, for so many of interlocutors, was a sign of lacking ‘national personality’ and dignity. Some of them wanted to fully embrace the Ottoman past as a modern and secular democracy—come to peaceful terms with the history. Some of them wanted
replicate the Ottoman model and get rid of the “absurd escape from the possibility of the re-emergence of the Ottoman success.” Some of them, as Ozyurek (2006) also masterfully described, wanted the authoritarian rule of the early years of the Republic to restore the “true Western character of the state.” These were all projects for the future of the society. They were desired changes in the present. They were accounts of restorative nostalgia (Boym 2001) for a ‘home,’ a point in time, or a state of being for better futures. They were yearning for a well-defined self under the circumstances of being the ‘bastard of the West,’ the superior of the ‘East,’ or the ‘true West diverted from its path’. All of these accounts had their own ‘ideal Other’ against which a home had to restored. All of the nostalgic were in need of a representative home, or an authority of identity, whose ontological integrity would have provided them consistency and power.

**Sheltering the Self**

Nostalgia is everywhere. It was on my bookshelf, at my parents’ living room, on the street, on a university campus, or in front of an old house that was restored as a restaurant. Without knowing what it exactly meant, I was quite sure that it had something to do with yearning for the past. After finishing my fieldwork and decided to write on nostalgia, my research taught, first of all, as most of the social science concepts, nostalgia was a contested term. Empirical analyses trying to test whether it was positive human act for identity construction or not and numerous theoretical discussion with a focus on country cases—mostly Post-Communist societies—clarify out understanding of what nostalgia means or widen our understanding with the help of the new additions to the discussion such as what the necessary conditions for nostalgia to emerge are.
Putting aside all the sophisticated discussion on nostalgia, I chose to focus on major components of nostalgia that were commonly considered as the core of the phenomenon: Home, yearning, past, and future. Nostalgia is simply yearning for a home or a point of time in the past that is projected on the shape of the future desired. Home or a socio-temporal state of being, I argued, is in fact not a geographical space but a way of making difference as the concept of ‘home’ suggests. Hence, nostalgia, I concluded, is simply yearning for a different self or an ontology that secured the demarcations separating the self from the Other.

In the case of Turkish society, focusing on the illustrative stories I chose among many others I gathered during my field work and my personal experiences, I identified various objects of nostalgia or yearning for a past/future such the restoration of the representative power of the Caliphate, unifying the Muslim world under a Turkish Caliphate, a Turkish society that embraces its Ottoman heritage, or a strong republican generation that would restore the early decades of the country. I tried to illustrate how, in fact, all these forms of objects of yearning shared the desire for power and a clear definition of a Self. I argued that, nostalgia can or should not be considered in isolation from the overall picture of representation of the Other as the perception of the Self, hence the Other, lies in its core. Therefore, I tried to show that how different sources or styles of assigning meaning to international relations among the Turks and the presence of post-colonial discourse as representation of the Other are related to our understanding of nostalgia as lack of trust in the international system and juxtaposed feelings of superiority and self-Orientalizing inferiority can reflect in the accounts of nostalgia.
CHAPTER 6
ZERO-SUM GAME OF HONOR: TURKISH WOMEN’S PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTHER

“My Mother Told me to Marry a Girl, Not a Slut!”

I started an earlier version of this chapter with a story from a Turkish newspaper. A story about a seventeen-year old girl murdered by her mother because of her pregnancy while she was not married. The murderer and the victim were both women. However, I noticed that there are already so many articles—no need to mention what is published in the media—that start with ‘detailed’ stories of violence against women by their intimates in various countries—including cases of ‘Muslim Immigrants’ in Northern America (see i.e. Boon 2006, Chesler 2009, Cihangir 2012, Hasan 2002, Parla 2001, Welden 2010). After an emotional tipping point, during my research I skipped the stories of women who were murdered. Having already read so many stories of violence against women, I noticed two sudden changes. Firstly, I could not, any more, stand the discomfort those stories made me incur. Secondly, I, unfortunately, started to normalize the pain in or the ‘reality’ of the stories. My attention shifted more towards the sections of the articles that dealt with arguments on how violence against women occur, what type of structures are more prone to produce such violence, or what socio-economic characteristics are correlated with higher level of violence against women. That is why, I decided to change my introduction. I decided to lessen my ‘contribution’ to the normalization of the stories of women who suffer and I hoped that the rest of my chapter does not serve such an end.

Concerning ‘violence against women,’ I still want to share two personal encounters among countless stories I was a part of. The first one, which I found
disgusting even more than a decade ago, is about the social status ‘given’ to women (virginity) by another woman.

It was the summer of 2001. I was spending my days in my room desperately studying for the university entrance exam. Therefore, I was a constant observer and a part of my mother’s daily life. I was a frequent by-stander of her conversations with her neighbors who occasionally came over for a quick cup of tea or coffee. One day, an older friend of my mother’s visited for an hour or so. It was a tradition in our neighborhood that neighbors gave each other fresh vegetables or fruits from their gardens located in the outskirts of the city. On that day, our neighbor brought some sweet cherries. I took a break from studying and washed a bowl of the fresh fruit, which was still warm showing that they were picked not more than an hour or so. I turned on the TV and started to enjoy the little gesture from our neighbor. I was watching TV but listening to my mother and the neighbor. They were talking about a guy whose wife had passed away two or three years ago. The neighbor had someone, a candidate wife, for him in mind. She was asking my mother about the new candidate and trying to understand why she was unwilling to marry the guy. My mother was clueless about the reluctance of the candidate. Still, the neighbor was quite sure that the ‘widow’ status of the man was the main issue. Their conversation went on with the neighbor insisting on the idea that the candidate and the guy should have met during a general invitation. In other words, they should have, she asserted, went on a date ‘open to public.’ Nothing, perhaps, was wrong with her intention of bringing two people together in front of a general public. That would have left no room for gossip or ‘shame’ to the honor of the candidate woman in a little community. The presence of others during a meeting/date
was good so that the woman was not ‘slut-shamed.’ Fair enough! Yet, it was
‘disgusting,’ I thought years ago when I was not even as sensitive as gender-equality as
I am now, when she made the following comment: “What is wrong with a guy being a
‘widow.’ For God sake, I understand a woman’s being widow but what makes a guy a
widow. As if they have virginity. A guy is a guy. So what if he was married. She is being
too picky!”

“What the hell,” my comment was. “Excuse me, but you guys better stop
intervening in other people’s life. Who cares what she chooses in a marriage or whom
she marries. Forget about such things please. Leave people alone,” I intervened
revealing that I was listening to them. It was another cultural code: Men do not listen to
or randomly join the women in their ‘ordinary conversation.’ My mother gave me a look
signaling that “do not even dare to talk about virginity right now in front of my neighbor.”
I shut up. And I left the room with the neighbors commenting, “New generation. They
have idea about everything. He’ll understand when he is older.” The cherries were
sweet and fresh. Her words were ‘old’ and ‘bitter.’

I had another similar story later in college. The neighbor who brought some fresh
fruit was the mother of five daughters and three sons. She was a housewife. And I
asked my mother, a few weeks before I started to write this chapter, about her neighbor
and found out that she even could not learn how to read and write as her father chose
not to send her to school. For so many, she can be a ‘prime-suspect traditionalist’
whose perception of virginity should not be as shocking or surprising as I considered it
to be. Yet, my friend’s mother, who is the main ‘protagonist’ of my second story, was not
a prime-suspect at all!
In our male-only dormitory on the campus, we were drinking beers and chatting about classes, dates—well sex—and how our lives will continue after graduation. Some of our friends were already arranging their marriage ceremonies with their girl friends and some were complaining not having relationship. Social science students were making fun of the nerdy engineering students’ incapacity of dating girls while empty beer cans were being gathered in a plastic bag to be discarded in the morning without the dorm staff noticing. A friend of ours protested that senior year was not the perfect time to think about getting married. We even did not know where we were going to find a job, he indicated. Besides, he was having issues with her mother opposing his ‘intention of marrying a girl from our university.’ He said, "My mother told me to marry a pure girl. Not a slut!" His mother was a schoolteacher living in one of the metropolis of Turkey. As far as I knew, she was not very religious. A secular woman, proud of maintaining a modern life was who my friend’s mother was. Yet, she opposed the idea of a ‘future daughter-in-law from our college,’ because “girls in our college were not in fact girls,” she believed. As Ozyegin (2009) also describes, a female is a girl as far as she is a virgin and after 'loss of hymen' there comes the womanhood. ‘The mother of a son’ did not approve his intention of marrying a “motor girl,” which refers to a one-stand-girl or promiscuous girls (2009, 114), studying at a university where pre-marital sex was ‘normal’ or where girls were mostly known to be ‘more free.’ My friend was in agreement with her mother. Another friend of mine and I opposed. We tried to support our arguments with theories we learned in the classroom and madly protested the patriarchy. ‘Culture’ or ‘common-sense’ was difficult to beat with our theories. Yet, we tried. In return, we were told, “you, libosh (a Turkish pejorative word (slang) used for
liberal) stop defending the girls. Be a man and talk for the man. You sissies!” They all laughed. My friend and I left the common room. They were our roommates. We were going to have breakfast altogether in the morning. We did not want a serious discussion or any more insult to our manhood, perhaps. Yet, before we left, we had told them to stop talking ‘ignorantly’—they were probably among the ‘most educated’ people in the country but obviously people could be educated in any direction. We insulted them back by suggestion them to ‘make a little bit progress for their own sake and for the society.’ We saved our manhood for the time being and got into our tiny dorm rooms. Life went back to ‘normal.’

In this chapter, the main characters of my stories are Turkish women that I was able to interview or had conversation with. Their perception of ‘self-dignity’ or superiority at the expense of ‘other women’s dignity’ is the main theme that all the stories converge around. Although ‘man’ is also in the stories, I essentially discuss how the stories of women or their self-perception indicate that Turkish women tends to gain self-respect or preserve their dignity, hence superiority, via patriarchal woman images and vis-à-vis the women in ‘other’ societies. I interpret this as a lack or weakness of solidarity among some Turkish women and their international co-genders, which results from the tendency of othering of the morals of the other societies. This, to an extent, resembles a zero-sum game in which one’s dignity—the basis of superiority or self-respect—necessitates the indecency of the Other. Finally, although the impact of the structure that shapes—if not cause—women’s perception of the ‘self’ and ‘the other’ can be problematized—which exceeds the merits of my chapter, I believe the overall picture of representation of the Other among the Turkish women once again reminds us how
women should not be regarded as mere victims of male-dominated world but should be considered as ‘agents’ that can be the protagonists in/of the patriarchal relations.

**Turkish Woman as the Ideal Type in a Not-Ideal Society**

“We are the best. But the society should learn to treat us better,” is a perfect summary of what the majority of my women interlocutors told me. A few of them argued that “Turkish women, in general, were stupid and need to start to ‘wake up’ to change the status of women” while agreed with the notion that “Turkish women have superior virtues compared to Other women.” Some described themselves as ‘truly Western,’ who, unlike women in the West, also know to manage their household, and argued that “centuries of progress were needed for the rest of the Turkish women to achieve a modern mindset” or “for the sake of women, narrow-minded religious people, especially men, had to be expelled from the country for good.”

These were the three trends of perception of the Self, Turkish woman, I was able identify from the stories I gathered: 1) Turkish woman, by her superior virtues, is the best but the society have to learn to respect (appreciate) them; 2) Turkish woman has superior virtues but she needs to revolutionize the society; 3) Some Turkish women were ahead of their society and the rest will never achieve that higher level unless the influence of religion (read Islam) on men was overthrown. Let me share some exemplary stories. However, before that, I would like to make an important remark.

Although there are countless examples of women ‘shaming’ other women in their own society, my main interest is in Turkish women who talk about a ‘Self’ with superior virtues compared to the women in other societies. I do not intend to discuss within society dynamics but limit my discussion to inter-society examples. When the women outside the Turkish society are of concern, most of the women I talked to, somehow,
always referred to a unified ‘Turkish women’ as if there were no tension within. In other words, the presence, or even the idea of ‘external Other women’ created an ideational solidarity among Turkish women. I believe that the picture I draw through the words of my interlocutors can well be problematized further. Yet, my interpretation or *mystory* for these particular stories focus on general ‘Self-Other’ relations in which Turkish woman are active ‘agents’ or ‘moral protagonists.’

Some of you may find my usage of ‘protagonist’ as an ambitious choice of wording. It might sound like an unnecessary accusation as it connotes violence. However, I believe, some of my interlocutors, or the mother of my friend, for instance, were as guilty or violent as the mother who killed her daughter because of her pre-marital pregnancy. Women who considered the Western women “like whores because they did not care about virginity” were, I believe, guilty. So was Zehra.

Zehra is a single mother in her mid-forties. With the help of her parents and cleaning apartments, she looks after her daughter who goes to a college in Istanbul. “We live at my parents’. My daughter has a scholarship. Difficult. I do not want her to lack anything. … She should go to the university. She should not suffer what I suffer. I’ll do everything for her to graduate. *Inshallah* she’ll become a teacher and save herself. I do clean other people’s houses. And she pays me back by being a decent girl. She goes to school and comes back home. She studies. (…) Her grandfather is very proud of her. She’ll never let our heads down! [She will not bring shame to the family] Her father couldn’t see her daughter going to the university. *Ilahi takdir* (*decree absolute*)” she proudly and sadly summarized her economic situation and relationship with her daughter.
I was at my friend’s apartment where I was temporarily residing in Istanbul. My friend clearly told me to leave before Zehra started cleaning the apartment as she was not comfortable with other people’s presence, especially men, in the apartments. And I had no intention of staying in on that beautiful spring morning. However, I was not eager to leave the apartment without eating the warm *simit* (some sort of a pastry similar to bagel) while sipping my freshly brewed tea, either. Zehra rang the doorbell while I was pouring a cup of tea for myself talking to my mother on the phone. I opened the door and asked my mother if I could hang up.

“Good morning. I am so sorry for my rudeness. I even couldn’t greet you. My mother was on the phone. You know mothers. I just came [to Turkey] and she is excited. I am [my friends name]’s friend, Nail. I’ll leave in a few minutes. I just poured tea and haven’t touched it. Would you like to have breakfast? *Simit* is also very fresh. Please drink the tea and eat *simit*, if you are hungry” I greeted her with a rather long introduction and a quick, half-hearted, offer of my breakfast. It must have been a warm welcome, which I am usually not good at, that she agreed to have tea but not *simit*: “I already had breakfast with my daughter. Her school is very close here and she took me to a little bakery. But I’ll have a cup of tea. You have your breakfast. I don’t have much work here. I’ll just clean. No ironing. So, don’t waste the fresh *simit*. Unless you want to have breakfast by the Bosporus.” I was granted the right to stay a little bit longer in the apartment. I found it quite friendly and try not to cross any boundaries as my friend warned me, “She doesn’t want any man in the house when she works.” It was understandable, or at least, I respected her choice of, perhaps, security. We got our cups to the living room.
She was sitting on a chair close to the door and I was sitting on the couch trying to find the news among all those popularly called ‘woman programs.’ “Nothing worth watching! Is there any show you watch? You can change the channel,” I gave the remote controller. She, with a shy tone, said “No. You watch whatever you want.” “There is nothing worth watching!” I re-emphasized. She, hesitantly, said, “Then, let me watch this.” She started watch a matchmaking show. I felt so awkward and embarrassed. I created an uncomfortable situation for myself. Firstly, I was sitting on the couch so relaxed while she was sitting ‘at the margin of the room.’ Some sort of a power relationship, it was, I thought. I was the man in the room. I was some sort of a reflection of the Turkish society/man. I did not have to think where I sit or how I sit. She was the woman who was supposed to keep the distance or keep the formality. Perhaps, the socio-economic relations were at work, too. But I felt that she was trying to stay as distant as possible, at the margins as much as possible. Secondly, I had just arrogantly underestimated her choice of entertainment by stressing that there was nothing worth watching, twice. To get rid of my embarrassment, I believe it was absolutely selfish, I said, “Oh! This show. My mother mentioned a couple times that she watched it, too. It must be very popular among the women.” My mother in fact never said such a thing. And, later, while writing this story, I asked myself, “Did I really have to say ‘among women?’” But at that moment, she was not as sensitive as I am with my words now. Or she did not ‘question my discourse’ as I did. Yet, my words seemed to have broken the ice. “What does your mother do? Where does she live?” she asked. “In Kayseri. She is a housewife. One of the most difficult jobs in the world. She devoted her life to her kids’ education… You said you had a daughter. What is her major?” I continued.
“Schoolteacher. She is working hard. But poor kids, the government does not give them a job. She’ll become a teacher and look after me,” she smiled with hope and despair. I knew I should have left as quickly as possible so that she could start cleaning the apartment. Yet, the conversation was fluent. “Inshallah, things go well for her,” I wished. Sometimes, I ask a question not for the answer but for keeping the conversation going on. “You two live alone?” I asked. She responded with the brief summary of her life I mentioned above. After that, I gave my condolence and I thought I was senseless to ask such a private question.

My cup was almost empty. I was about to leave. But this time Zehra asked, “Do you miss Turkey?” “Nah! Well, sometimes. I do miss the food all time, though,” I responded, “Especially, my mother’s cooking. I’ll eat some delicious food in about three weeks.” Her motherhood and my being a son missing his mother’s cooking introduced a friendlier atmosphere in the room. She was closer to the center of the room. She moved her chair next to the couch facing the TV and asked if I wanted another cup of tea. “Oh, no! I better go so that you can start cleaning.” “Don’t worry about it. Ten minutes early ten minutes late. Let me bring you another cup of tea,” she replied. “No. No. I’ll get it,” I walked to the kitchen. I came to my spot on the couch with my tea.

“How long are you staying in Turkey?” she asked. “Until the end of summer. Sometimes I can’t stand staying here more than two weeks. Family can be overwhelming. This time I need to stay longer. I came for research. For my dissertation,” I replied. She nodded. She seemed not interested. I probably said more than I needed to.
“Are you married?” she asked, while I was reading the news on my phone. “No single.” I started another too-much-information session, “I used to date someone. After moving to America, things started to get complicated. We had to break up. Well, she chose to break up. Later, I heard there were several complications. My family is Muslim and hers Jewish. You know such things …” I continued. “Oh! A foreigner?” she asked. I smiled and responded, “No. She was not a foreigner. She is Turkish like you and I are. She speaks Turkish, was born in Istanbul. So were her parents. She is just Jewish. Different religion. Turkish. She was from Istanbul.” “You’ll find another one. Don’t worry! But get married soon. Don’t wait too long. Once you wait too long, you miss your chance of marrying a nice girl.” she consoled and ‘warned.’ I smiled and kept my eyes on my phone.

I was about to leave. I thanked and searched for the cell phone that I use in Turkey. In the meantime, a fight started in the show on the TV. Zehra stopped working on her preparation for cleaning and stood right in front of the TV. I could not have understood why she looked so excited. Probably, she would have lacked empathy, too, if she had seen me watching one of my favorite shows. And then she complained, “Girls these days are crazy. She is on this show for weeks. She divorced twice, already. Every day, there is a new guy who comes to propose her. Some of the guys are really wealthy. I don’t know what she is looking for. Or what the guys find at her. All she wants fame. Still, she says no even to the richest. She is trying to be famous. A guy called yesterday, and told that all she wanted was money. She denied it. He was one of her boyfriends. She denied that too. She is quite comfortable (of doubtful morality). God keeps [women like her] away from our homes. And you! You better find a decent
Turkish girl to marry. Don’t get old or find another foreigner! What happened to the Turkish girls!” That shy lady I met almost thirty minutes ago disappeared and a reflection of my aunt stood right next to me! I was ready to leave. I told her I would listen to her advice and left. I really had a problem of keeping a distance from ‘strangers.’ “Why do I always become friendly with everybody?” I regretted letting her advice me on marriage, I asked myself in the elevator why I always became friendly with strangers so easily. But “Did I have right to regret? I was the first one asking personal questions?” I questioned and spent the rest of the day in bookstores, walking around the city, and eating some food that I had missed.

Zehra really sounded like my aunt—with the difference that my aunt was more ‘explicit’ in her words. My aunt lived in Germany for more than a decade. They moved back to Turkey after saving enough to have a better life. She is a “widow who, thank to God, have a good life with the social benefits she receives from Germany,” she often tells. “I was able to work in Germany at a time when most of my friends could not even think about working in Turkey. Things [in Germany] were better. I still have the benefits from the German state,” she thanks God, all the time. She was really content with the rights or liberties as a woman in Germany. However, one day when I visited her, she leaned towards me in her flat, and asked quietly, “Is it true that you are talking [dating] a German girl?” “Yes,” my response was short because I really did not continue since I knew what was coming next. She put on a sour face and told me, “They might be beautiful and attractive in their youth but they really get so ugly when they pass their twenties. Besides, does it really suit you? German girl? They are never faithful. Find a Turkish girl. We know you are different, but now you are young. Believe me! You’ll
regret marrying a German.” “Oh. It is too early to decide on a marriage, aunt! We’ll see. Come on! How’s your health?” I wanted to change the topic. Yet, she was determined, “Listen to me! I saw so many of them. In Germany, they were not faithful at all. Do you want a divorce after a few years? They don’t have the same family ties we do. They flirt with other guys in front their husbands. And husbands! It is a different story. May God mend their ways! But Listen to me! Before it is too late, stop it. Find someone that suits you, that! Someone decent! What the hell do you see at the foreigners? [She mentioned a name] married a Dutch. But she was very young when they got married [I knew what she implied]. Also she became a Muslim. So does your girlfriend think about converting?” I tried to show I really did not care. “Aunt! Even I don’t practice religion. Why would she?” But it was already a lost cause against my aunt. The best was to change the topic and I succeeded in that.

Zehra and my aunt were typical examples of women who would consider a foreign woman as lacking morals or promiscuous. Their approach to a woman who goes on dates before marriage or with multiple partners before or after a marriage is that “she is not a ‘marriage material.’” Foreign woman lack decency, honor, namus, or dignity because they are mostly promiscuous. This is an unfortunate form of representation of the Other woman. Well, an unfortunate truth for so many Turkish women, and a lot of Turkish guys.

At the beginning of June 2015, I received e-mail from a female student studying at an American university. She was interested in going to an exchange program at Koc University, Istanbul. One of the question she asked about the city and the Turkish culture in general—her parents had concerns—that how the nightlife and what the
status of women were in Turkey. I needed to be precise. Yet, I could not really describe everything in e-mail. I decided to give her some practical information. I told her that nightlife was vibrant and there are so many choices of entertainment in Istanbul where even LGBTQ groups are empowered. And I wrote, “I hate to write such things or telling women what an appropriate dress is but for your security there might be a couple things you should be careful about: (...) code of dating might be quite different than how things are in San Francisco. Body language or facial expressions might mean different things to different people around the world. But as an advice, try not to be friendly with everybody—especially man—at a random bar during your first weeks/months. You’ll probably notice what I am talking about when you are in Istanbul, but some Turkish men have tendency to be insisting!” She really appreciated that particular information, as it was parallel to some things she read about Turkey. Well, in fact, I could have been more direct and told her about a person I happened to be friend for a year or so or directly translated his words as representative of so many Turks.

I had a friend. I stopped talking to him after noticing how his thoughts were not even close to mine. And later, I heard that some of my women friends stopped talking to him after he publicly indicated that “There are girls to have fun with and there are girls to marry (read virgin).” Well is he an outlier? In my little social circle, he is. In general? Unfortunately, not! That woman going to an exchange program in Istanbul will definitely come across countless man at the bars who think exactly the same. And sadly, foreign women are thought to fit into the former group of girls these men define as ‘for fun.’ Just a few days before I decided to write this paragraph, a female friend of mine complained: “I know how most Turkish guys, even in Gainesville, see a woman dating or who dated
a foreigner: *Access granted*. They all think that once you date a foreigner, you become more available, sexually available. You know what I am talking about! Someone just told me that a bunch of guys talk about this shit all the time!” I can keep on writing even more disgusting perceptions among some ‘type of’ Turkish men. Yet, let me continue with my woman antagonists and how they see other women as the opposite Other that legitimizes their own patriarchal images as the most honorable and virtuous.

I met Didem at a little café in Kadikoy, one of the central districts of Istanbul on the Anatolian side. She said it was one her favorite places because the fortuneteller “was amazing.” “He really knows it. He even foresaw that a friend of mine was going abroad. In a month, she got accepted to LSE (London School of Economics),” she praised the fortuneteller who reads the coffee cups for a really good fee. Wondering if she was going to let her ‘future revealed to her,’ I asked, “Will you drink coffee?” “No. Not today. I am going to bring my friends here on Wednesday. I will drink then. And of course the fortunetelling,” she laughed. Then she continued, “I know it sounds stupid but it is fun. I don’t really believe in it. But you know what they say, ‘don’t believe in fortunetelling, but don’t stay away from it, either!’” We both laughed. We talked about various things. How her education was going in Bogazici University. She was less than two years away from getting her PhD. “I did summer-research in Imperial College, the study is really promising and has good funding. The professor will probably open a post-doc position for me. I certainly will go there. I am tired of Turkey,” she shared recent developments in her career plans. I met Didem through her boyfriend whom I have known since my junior year in college. I was not really fortunate in reaching women interlocutors, let alone participating in their daily life such as social gatherings. Hence, I
was asking my friends if they could introduce me to their friends for interviews. Didem was very a kind fellow social science grad student who spared more than two hours to chat. She even agreed to meet me at a district, which was quite far away from her apartment. We talked about the Turkish government, her unrest about the increasing Islamist appearance in Turkey, and the diminishing tolerance towards the minorities. “In Istanbul we are still okay. But they by they, the space where we can walk comfortably get narrower. Gezi had a real impact on spreading the culture of opposition to different groups. Still, in Anatolia, most people don’t even know the Gezi protests occurred or know things how pro-AKP media tells. And it is important to remember, Turkey does not only consist of Istanbul and Izmir. (...) Women can wear headscarf now freely. I really support that. But no one talks about the increased rate of violence against women,” She told me. I asked her if the conformist pressure on women to become more traditional increased or not. “Certainly it did. Still, people do not understand that it is an individual choice. Abortion. They try to make it illegal. Surprisingly, No. Not really surprisingly, I know so many women who want it to be illegal. There are already religious or cultural taboos about it. We do not need a legal one! When are we going to internalize the principle of ‘personal choice?’ Unfortunately, the government makes it harder and harder. There are so many women organizations. They do great jobs. Still, we need a lot of progress,” she answered. I agreed with her. I continued, “I had a chance to talk some women in my hometown. Their perceptions about the women in Europe or America are quite fascinating. They think most of them [women in America or Europe] are sluts. I do not argue that they there is anything wrong living a life in accordance with religion or traditions as far as they are chosen by the women themselves. But degrading
the other women, especially as “promiscuous whores” is on the border of hate crime. Maybe, not even on the border, it is already a hate crime. Don’t you think?” “This what we suffer all day here my dear. You get on a bus. Guys do give their seat to a woman with a headscarf but not to someone who wears a low-cut dress. Or try to walk in Fatih [a district with a conservative image] in the clothes that you usually wear in Bebek [a more liberal part of Istanbul]. I am sure things can be worse in Anatolia, but what the fuck! Don’t harass me in the middle of Istanbul because of my clothes.” We continued on talking. Her ideas were mostly around the premise of the necessity of ‘individualism’ as a main pillar of the society. And her ideas on the status of women were mostly critique of what was going on in the country. She also got annoyed when I told her that in my hometown I met women who thought European or American women were immoral. One thing she mentioned about the Other women in the West—the women in Anatolia were also an other for her—that “they were no different [in their prejudices] in understanding the women in Turkey or in Islamic societies. Neither of them gets rid of the stereotypes. They are all ethnocentric. In the West, they can’t understand that given the fact that there are examples of oppression of women, to veil or not can also be the personal choice of women. And the East, women must stop thinking that wearing a mini-skirt makes a woman a whore. Or, god damn! Virginity is not only a biological thing but men can also have a principle of virginity, if the problem is to have sex or not before marriage, they must understand that the same can and should be expected from men.”

Gonca was one of the women whose perceptions—or my version of the story—annoyed Didem. I did not share any details or the full story with her. Yet, my interpretation that some women thought that European or American women were mostly
immoral was not welcomed by Didem. And our feelings were similar. Gonca was a thirty-five-years old housewife. She chose to quit working as a civil engineer after giving birth to her first child. “I am a civil engineer. But I am not working. I used to. I chose to leave my work.” she replied when I asked her occupation. We met in her neighborhood where there were so many restaurants and cafés. It was cold outside. Hence, we chose to sit inside at a restaurant. Her kids were in the school and she had a few hours off. “I still take projects. My kids go to school now. I help a friend of mine from time to time. It is better. I work whenever I want. After here I need to drop a couple of drawings at her office, in fact” she told. I explained her what my research was about. A server intervened twice, asking for our orders. I ordered a bottle of water and a desert plate, which was a mix of all different baklavas and ice cream. Gonca warned me that it was too cold for ice cream. Yet, I did not change my order. “A hot tea will balance afterwards,” I joked. I asked her about what he thinks of when I said Other, the West, the East, and the Self. She seemed quite indifferent. Instead of giving me an answer, she said, for instance for the Other, “I do not think there is any other for Turkey. Do you think there is a threat against us? I do not think so,” for ‘the Self,’ “I can’t really say anything for this. I do not see myself belonging to a certain group! I do not affiliate with any political party” and for the West and the East, “Just directions.”

My initial thought was that she was trying to complicate my research or she was trying to give simple and direct answers just to piss me off. “Smarty pants!” She was eating her desert and sipping her cappuccino while she pretty much opposed each and every question I asked her. She did not see any reason for explaining her answers, as they were quite clear examples of common sense like her following idea that “I don’t
think Turkey belongs to neither Europe nor the Middle East. Everyone will tell you that.” It was boring. I could have got the same results if I had given her a questionnaire with the following question. I had no clue why I was “wasting” my time talking to her. At least the desert was delicious and the ice cream was very tasty.

At some point during our conversation, I asked her what she thought about ‘Burn a Quran day’ or ‘the Cartoon crisis in Denmark.’ She defined them as instances of hate and lack of education. True education, for her, did not start in the school. For her, education starts with the family and women had the responsibility for teaching their kids to share, especially to share the world. I definitely agreed with her idea of ‘teaching the kids to share the world,’ we could also add ‘preserve the world.’ But I chose not to push my luck. She finally started to elaborate. Perhaps, the topic was something that she could proudly talk about. I could tell that! “So if families are where kids learn not to hate or are supposed to learn not to hate, can we also say, they also learn how or whom to hate from their parents?” I asked. I even did not what was the rationale under my question. But I had a strong urge to confront her thoughts. Her response was, “Possible.” And she continued, “Families are changing nowadays. I always believe in the power of a family. That is why I quit my job when I had my son. As a woman, my priority is to make sure that my kids are safe, nurtured, and grow up as proper individuals. It is more important than buying them new toys with the money I earn instead of spending time with them. This is me. This is my personal idea. I also strongly believe it is true. Maintaining a strong and supportive family should be a priority of the state, well all of the states so that children are not traumatized in their childhood. Traumatized kids mean future generations with all sorts of problems. And female bird
makes the nest, which means that women with professions, first of all, if they choose to get married, prioritize their families. While I was on vacation in California, staying at my uncle’s, we used to go to grocery shopping. Women in nice dresses were mostly buying frozen food. You can’t bring up a child like that or take care of your family. You can not even keep feeding yourself like that. If you are working, then make sure you hire a woman to take care of the household. We know men won’t do it.”

I intervened, “maybe they have a stay-home-partner?” “Maybe. I heard about that new fashion. But women, by nature, are more capable of doing the delicate work, not men,” she quickly responded. “I have some friends. They are in a civil-union [I did not know what it was in Turkish so I had to explain what a civil-union is] with a same-sex partner. They seem to be doing fine in managing ‘delicate jobs without needing anyone else. Or I can both cook and carry heavy furniture, if this is what you mean. I do not agree with you that woman is by nature more inclined towards delicate work.” “Who taught you how to cook? Your mother right?” she asked. “Not really. Let’s assume that my mother taught me. This does not mean that my kids have to learn it from their mother. They’ll probably learn it from their father,” I reasoned. And then I continued, “You see. We have just one clear example to show how gender roles can be misleading.” She asked me, “So you do not believe in the separation of man and woman. Everything is equal.” I responded, “in an ideal world it should be. But in our world there are already socially and historically created realities such as women is better in the kitchen. We need to, I believe, teach the new generations to question. So we should add our list: share the world and question,” I smiled because I felt the conversation was heating up. “So your friends, living this not-formal-marriage life, do
you find it normal?” she asked. I knew that was coming. “Yes. Everybody should be free in their preferences” I responded. “You must be thinking that I am a narrow minded person, but I do not see anything normal in that. I would not even call them as a family. I know some of them want to adopt kids as well. I see it on the news. But it is simply so wrong. It would destroy the marriage and the family. A child cannot be brought up with two father figures at home. They will eventually need a mother. And that point will be devastating. That is one thing I would definitely oppose to. Can you imagine a homosexual couple living next door? God forbids. Knock on the wood! If my kids do such a thing, I would break their legs before their father do.” “Okay. Maybe, we better change the topic. I believe we have two opposing philosophies. And it would mean a long discussion. But I still do respect your ‘share the world’ principle, which means the world is everyone’s” I replied. She got really mad. I admit it now that I must have sounded a little bit sneaky or sarcastic with my comment. Yet, I really saw no point in further discussion. I asked her a few other questions such as “What do you think about the European Union?” I was literally trying to pass the time. Later during the conversation, she told me that her niece watched American TV shows all the time. “Since she started watching those shows, she became more rebellious and started to act quite weird. My sister found out that she was texting her friends about going out more often or meet with them to smoke cigarettes. She is only fifteen. I told my sister to take away her computer. She learns a new life style from those shows. In Turkey you cannot live like that. You know what happens to a girl. Boys see her as easy. Thanks to God, she noticed her mistake. My sister struggled a lot, though. It is so true, a good example has twice the value of good advice. Unfortunately, my sister and niece, they
learned their lesson by living a bad example. What I am trying to say, if we stick to our family values or our duties as woman and man, no one needs to live a bad example.”

We continued our conversation about a couple TV shows in America. She complained about “too much sex,” “promiscuity,” “nudity,” “drugs,” and “distorted family models” dominating the TV shows. Turkish media or popular culture, she was afraid, imitates those shows in their programs as they were means of making more money. I asked her if she was watching any of them or read on the news. She said she watched some of them but she was able to separate the right and wrong, but kids were not able to do. After our deserts, we had tea. I stopped recording our conversation after thanking her. We continued to chat a little bit more about same-sex marriage, American TV shows, and how Turkey was slowly becoming, in her words, “a little America.” And finally, she told me that she gave birth her first kid in New Jersey so that he would have American citizenship. She hoped that her son would go to Harvard one day. I wished her and her kid the best. We left after she generously paid the check by saying “you are still a student. When you start working, you pay then.”

Nuray was a twenty-one-year old woman working for a construction company as a secretary in Kayseri. I met her through a friend of mine and asked her if she could help me with my research by having a brief conversation some time. She enthusiastically agreed to meet one day after work. She also told me she would bring a few other friends of hers, if I needed more data. I gave her my mother’s cell phone number that I was using by then and she called on a Friday evening. She told me that they were going to have dinner and coffee afterwards. She invited me to join her and her friends. I had a dinner planned with my cousins. I cancelled it and joined them for
dinner. During the dinner, we talked about their jobs and life in America and Turkey. They asked if Tommy Hilfiger was really cheap in America or whether smartphones were really free. They also wondered about how much the flights were to New York City as they were planning to have a vacation there, when they had money. After the dinner, for which all of them co-paid my share as they all insisted that I was their guest, we went to a nearby Starbucks. I asked them what they wanted and insisted that at least the coffees should have been on me. I got their orders and Nuray’s sister, Reyhan, helped me carry five cups of coffee. Mustafa, complained that Reyhan stole the role of being a gentleman from him and embarrassed him in front of Nuray and her friend Yasemin, who was a co-worker of Mustafa at a private primary school. Reyhan was the only student. Well, besides me. She was eighteen and admitted that she was a lazy student who had no urge to go to college.

We sat outside so that smokers could enjoy their coffee with their cigarettes. After settling, Mustafa asked, “shall we start?” They were all looking at me. I asked, “Start what?” They all laughed and Reyhan, with a snobbish tone, asked, “Aren’t you going to ask questions to us? Interviews?” It was one of the most awkward moments during my research. I was sitting on a chair while all of them were sitting on armchairs across me. I suddenly felt uncomfortable.

While I was en exchange student, in our Communication during Conflict Situations class, we used to perform a workshop called The Theater of the Oppressed. We interpreted situations of daily conflict between different identities by re-creating the scenes of conflict in the classroom. On the first day of the workshop, our professor asked us to arrange five chairs in a way to show who hold the power, which chair
represented the authority. Our seating plan at the Starbucks was like one of the arrangements we discussed a lot about in 2006 in Amsterdam. Think about a chair on its own, while the other four lined next to each other facing that one single chair: Me facing my interviewees. In 2006, some of us thought that the single chair held the power as it is the authority giving a speech or teaching the class, while rest of us argued that the four chairs share the power as a jury evaluating the single chair. No matter whichever, if any of these two, scenario was taking place in that Starbucks, I really did not enjoy it. I sensed the ‘power of being a group’ across me. On my side, on the other hand, I felt the power of their ‘admiration’ for higher education, having been traveled more, and the ability to interview with them. Anyway, I was uncomfortable.

Due to my discomfort, I told them, “Oh. I do not have any questions. I mean nothing fixed. I just wanted to talk to you in general about life in Turkey or how do you perceive American or Europe. During our conversation, if I think of anything, I’ll definitely ask you. So forget about interviews. Let’s enjoy our coffee and our new friendship.” What a lie it was! I have not seen or talked to any of them since the interviews. Still, we all started to compare the pros and cons living in Turkey and America. Women, they all agreed, had more freedom in America. Reyhan, Nuray, and Yasemin all agreed that they did not have a life in Kayseri. They complained that they could not dress as they wish or they cannot walk on the street after a certain time. Yasemin told that once she was verbally harassed and she called the police. The police, she told us, ordered her to go home instead of walking alone on the street after midnight. “I was going home from a concert on the university campus. What could I do?
Sleep somewhere on the campus instead of walking to my home from the bus stop?” Nuray asked her, “What were you wearing?” “Skirt and t-shirt,” Yasemin responded.

I intervened, “It does not really matter what she wore. Nothing gives a guy the right to disturb her. And the police, you should have filed a complaint. I hope you did.” They all laughed and told me that I forgot about Turkey so quickly. Nuray protested, “No. It does not give the right to disturb her, but she better not forgets where she lives. Every society has its rules or morals. We should obey them. If you live in Kayseri or Konya or some other place in Turkey, you cannot wear a short skirt, when you are walking alone on the street. We always have this fight with Reyhan. As her elder sister, I always warn her not to wear different. Because I know how these women are known.” Yasemin seemed to have been offended. Nuray noticed that and told her, “Do not get me wrong. We all know you. But we all know those other women, too. Why would you even let yourself seen like that?” I told her that I really could not understand why she would insist that women must dress ‘properly’ because otherwise men can harass them. She told me that it was to protect women against the men. “Men will harass you no matter what you wear. They are just men. Not all of them, don’t get me wrong. Mustafa you don’t get me wrong either. My point is that it is a matter of honor. Walking around and giving the signal that you are promiscuous or even giving the slightest chance of being considered like that in Turkey is not really rational. Well, the way you dress can make you an easy girl or a well-respected one. In America or Europe, I only saw France but I heard it is all the same, and we all see it on TV. Women do not care. They have multiple partners. So do their husbands,” She maintained.
I thought, “Yeah. It is a big swinger club. What the hell you are talking about!” Instead of my real thoughts, I told her, “Well, there might be some couples who choose to have multiple partners. But it does not mean that everybody in America or Europe gives no fuck to marriage. Pardon me! Besides, I do not think that clothes are really related with morals. One’s clothes cannot measure one’s honor.” I was angry. Reyhan agreed with me but added, “But my sister has a point. No matter how decent Turkish women can be and show it by their life styles the society especially men do not respect that. They always find ways to blame it on the girls. But still, I agree with my sister. Women should dress properly.” Nuray opposed, “No. Girls can be honorable and wear whatever they want. Mini skirt does not mean that whoever wears it sleeps with so many guys or have sex before marriage. Yes, it is true. Women in Europe have different values. But no one can deny that their society respect women better than ours. I wish we had a similar society. We would get the respect we deserve. Still I don’t believe that mini skirt means I am a slut.” She laughed and said, “Now I am swearing like one of those!”

These women whose words I shared were exemplary stories from my fieldwork. Combined with my everyday experience in Turkey or within Turkish people in general, I consider these notions of honor, purity, or dignity as reflections of seeking a ‘superior’ woman-self. It is a form gaining self-respect or superior-virtues by hostile images of the Other women. Self-respect is gained or preserved—within a patriarchal society—through the ‘other women.’ I believe these stories indicate that although there is a lack of division among Turkish women based on gender, there is solidarity among ‘certain women’ based on dignity. Parallel to that, there is no gender-based or value based
solidarity between Turkish women and the women in other societies. In general, these stories indicate that women-self’s dignity depends on the presence or visibility of the dishonor of the Other-women. I believe this theme of representation of the Other among the Turkish women implies that women are not only the victims of a patriarchal society world but also ‘agents’ perpetuating patriarchal images that can be hostile against Other women.

**Honor Killings: Omni-Presence of Women in the Stories of Women**

If you conduct research on honor killings or violence against women in Turkey, the number of studies that you can easily access is, sadly, remarkably high. It is unfortunate not because I do not support the academic interest in the topic, but it is sad because there are so many cases and continuity of violence against women in Turkey. I became aware of this ‘feasibility’ right after I had finished my fieldwork and returned home to start my deskwork. Since then I kept reading over and over with so many ideas to be put into words. Still, I wanted to write this chapter the last. Intuitively, or as an effect of a book, I struggled to formulate an argument: These stories of some Turkish women were violent attitudes towards the Other women in order to ‘justify’ self-honor or dignity. *Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (*Sjoberg and Gentry 2007*) which I read in my first year of my graduate program certainly helped me to see ‘individuals as equal,’ in every aspect. No matter how much pro-gender-equality I was, I had stereotypes such as women were more peaceful or less prone to hate or conduct violence. Again, probably with the intuition I gained from the same book, in our graduate seminar on politics in the Middle East, I initiated a class discussion on the idea that women were the main perpetuator of honor killings in Turkey as one woman’s
honor was meaningful as far as another woman’s dishonor was condemned or punished. One’s death was, I argued, another’s gain in the currency of honor.

With these thoughts shuffling on my mind, I decided to write to Dr. Laura Sjoberg, at the University of Florida, to ask for her help. I needed to further my literature review to make more sense of my own ideas and stories. Her prompt response (Sjoberg 2015) was exactly what I needed. She suggested, “One interesting way to talk about your stories could be feminization—especially Spike Peterson’s use of the term—would be interesting.” She also mentioned her study, which I already had on my desk, as another way of developing an understanding of my stories. She suggested some other articles that I added to my already growing folder of research for this chapter.

While finding articles or books on the issue was not a major problem, I still did not know where to start. Besides, I had two major concerns about authoring this chapter. Firstly, I had never written anything that focused on gender. I used gender as one of my independent variables in trying to explain approval of Islamist terror in my master thesis. Yet, I did not write anything about gender. In other words, I did not have confidence in writing a ‘feminist’ piece. In daily life, during conversations with friends, I always identified as a feminist and try to convince some of my friends that feminism is not only about women per se, but it is about all individuals. It aims to overcome the setbacks imposed on individuals by the general structures they are embedded in. However, professionally, I always felt far from writing on it. So, I questioned my professional capability of writing this chapter.

Secondly, one day, during a dinner party I had with some other graduate students, a friend of mine from psychology department told me that she had been
arguing with her advisor to not use ‘race’ as one of her independent variables. She believed that even using race as a category had a negative impact by perpetuating racism, by assuming that race matters. Her point of view, once again, made me question how ethical my choice of writing a chapter on women and representation of Other. Did I perpetuate, by any means, any gender stereotypes?

These two concerns I had for this chapter could well apply to my other chapters. Professional adequacy of writing on any matter, my expertise, or my power stemming from playing the role of one of the authorities on the issue always troubles me. And this is only decided—given the dynamics of the profession of IR, or academia in general—when the ‘final product’ is in the ‘market’ for others’ consideration. So, my first concern was in fact an existential issue resulting from being in the ‘business of academia.’ The second concern due to my use of woman as a different category was simply similar to my use of ‘Turk’ as a category, in fact. Yet, feminism or gender, I felt, was more political or more radical than my other categories. Let me clarify this point.

In her Foreword to Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives (Sjoberg and Via 2010), Enloe (2010, xi) writes:

Adopting an explicitly feminist perspective is not the same as choosing to look at something from a gender perspective. Certainly there is substantial overlap, but they are not coterminous. Sometimes a lot of us describe our analytical explanatory approach as from a “gender perspective” because, we imagine, that sounds to many of our listeners and readers less frightening, less radical, less political than from a “feminist perspective.”

Enloe’s remark on choosing ‘gender perspective’ to ‘feminist’ is in fact what I was going through as a crisis of defining what my chapter is (about). She was definitely right. Choosing ‘gender perspective’ in understanding representation of the Other among the
Ordinary Turks was “less frightening, less radical, less political than from a “feminist perspective,”” perhaps not for my readers, but at least, for me. This, I thought, before reading the rest of Enloe’s Foreword, could ‘decrease’ the value of my chapter or make it less interesting. Yet, Enloe indicates, “Substituting “gender” for “feminist” doesn’t seem cowardly; it just seems prudent. And then, too, there are those occasions when we really are not aiming to fashion a feminist analysis” (2010, xi). That is exactly what my chapter is all about. It is not a feminist work. I believe creating a feminist study on representation of the Other, although my earlier chapters refer to some issues feminist scholars would pay more attention, is beyond the scope of my chapter. However, I use gender as a category for discussing, or organizing my information on representation of the Other. This chapter is a gendered-analysis of representation of the Other among ordinary Turkish women.

While in the field, I noticed that there was a tendency of women to describe women in Other societies in terms of their (lack of) decency, promiscuity or family values. Moreover, I could not discuss it within other themes as I was already considering those stories with a gender perspective. I decided to conceptualize it as ‘a gender perspective’ after re-reading Enloe’s remark, “Substituting “gender” for “feminist” does not seem cowardly; it just seem prudent” (2010, xi). Therefore, for the sake interpreting my data with the purpose of understanding and adding to the picture of representation of the Other among ordinary Turks, in this chapter I approach the issue with “gendered lenses.”

I authored my mystory in this chapter with “Gendered lenses” which Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, 11-12) summarize by referring to leading feminist scholars:
Jill Steans explains gendered lenses as a method for the study of international politics, instructing: “To look at the world through gender lenses is to focus on gender as a particular kind of power relation, or to trace out the ways in which gender is central to understanding international processes. Gender lenses also focus on the everyday experiences of women as *women* and highlight the consequences of their unequal social position (Steans 1998, 5). Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan describe lenses as ‘filters’, which organize, prioritize and categorize knowledge (1999, 1). These filters, consciously or unconsciously, ‘foreground some things, and background others’ in all research and knowledge formulation (Peterson and Runyan 1999, 21). This book is written through the lenses of international relations (IR) feminism, which takes the observation of gender subordination as a starting point for analysis. Feminists in international relations have ‘challenged the discipline to think about how its theories might be reformulated and how its understandings of global politics might be improved if gender were a category of analysis’ (Tickner and Sjoberg 2006, 186).

Clarifying, especially for myself, the characteristics of my chapter, I advanced my research towards understanding a more specific framework of interpretation of representation of the Other women in Turkish society. One of the presumptions in my understanding of Turkish women’s representation of the Other women was that the stories I gathered for this dissertation were all instances of ‘women disliking other women on the basis of dignity which result in lack of solidarity among them.’ They were ‘violent’ in their words and their understanding of ‘purity’ was a matter of *us vs. them*. *Honor*, as a status to be possessed, was mostly seen as a virtue to be protected by the women, which Turkish women were better at doing than the Other women were.

First, let me summarize the studies that focus on the issue of honor (killings) and the status of women in the Turkish society. Then, I will continue with how the case is relevant to the idea of ‘violent women.’
When the issue of violence against women is of concern, honor is always a key term that studies resort to explanations. My chapter is certainly not an exception. The reason for this, so many scholars agree, is that Turkish society values honor, which in turn result in the definition of the Turkish culture as a “honor culture” (van Osch et al. 2013) or a “culture high on honor” (Cihangir 2012) in contrast to “culture of dignity” (Cross et al. 2012). Individuals, mostly men, in honor cultures are considered to be more willing to confront others who insult their dignity or devalue individuals who choose not to confront but withdraw from actions to preserve the honor like most individuals in Northern USA, which is an example of culture of dignity. The first thing I noted down about honor and Turkey has been the summary of what ‘honor culture’ is: A society, especially its male members, actively confronting any insult or danger to their honor. But what is exactly honor, especially in Turkey? Most of the studies conducting empirical analysis—or comparing cases—have a tendency to apply a generic definition (see i.e. Cross et al. 2012, Guerra, Giner-Sorolla, and Vasiljevic 2012). Yet, I was really interested in an operational definition of honor for Turkey. I tried so hard to come up with a definition in ordinary language, but I could not have articulated one. All I wrote on a piece of paper was different occasions when someone’s honor was protected or damaged such as when a stranger swears at someone’s wife or mother. At a bar fight, using the F-word for someone’s mother might result in the offender’s death because when women are considered, honor became namus, and involves sexual purity, and becomes much more serious. So, honor or namus, to an extent, was something that we know it is honor or namus when we see it; when we ‘securitize,’ ‘lose’ or kill/die for it. Still, with the hope of finding a pragmatic definition, I continued.
My search was in vain. I could not find anything but came to the same conclusion I reached on my notebook. In Turkey, honor or namus was all about what is protected, who can keep it safe or lose, and who ‘takes extreme measures’ to restore it. It was all about how preservation of honor (read honor killing) functions. I might have reached that conclusion because of my gendered lenses. In my notebook, I had included flag or other national symbols that represented honor. Yet, at the individual level, pretty much everything was about family, decency, morals or sexual purity. What I needed to really focus on was honor killings since my stories were in fact ‘innocent’ instances of violence or violent words.

Man is the dominant actor in honor killings, at least according to the literature. Chesler, referring to Feldner (2000), a researcher at the Middle East Media Research Institute, indicates that “according to a psychiatrist in Gaza honor killing culture is a culture in which a man who refrains from “washing shame with blood” is a “coward who is not worthy of living…”” (Chesler 2009, 2). So, was I dealing with a sub culture within honor cultures? Was Turkey a habitat for honor killing culture? I went back to the articles I saved on my computer and searched ‘again’ what honor culture was?

Honor culture is composed of individuals (read men) who were willing to confront any danger to their honor by any means because “being a person of honor is the most important virtue of a person” and “Turkey was only one of the Mediterranean countries that is characteristically a honor culture” (Bagli and Sev’er 2003, Gregg 2007, Kardam 2005) In honor cultures, individuals’ worth is determined not only by how they behave and evaluate themselves, but also by how others evaluate them. In honor cultures, traditionally, a man needs to carefully cultivate a reputation for toughness and
willingness to retaliate against any threat to him, self, his family, or his property (Nisbett and Kohen 1996, Cross et al. 2012, 346). And finally, “paradoxically, honor cultures are often also known as places of great politeness, which Turkish people are no exception to” (Cross et al. 2012, 346-347).

Honor culture and culture of honor killing was I had at hand. The micro phenomenon that I was interested in was honor killing. I, for some reason, had a tendency to simplify things as much as possible. Perhaps, my insecurity in writing on the issue of women and representation of Other was haunting me. Still, I was determined. I put on my desk some blank papers from the drum of my printer. I took my fountain pen that I use for taking ‘serious notes.’ I closed every distracting window on my laptop. I blocked access to my social networking accounts. I ordered two large pizzas and brewed a lot of coffee in addition to the soda I had in my fridge, despite the fact that I cut off sugar from my diet. I texted a couple of friends of mine indicating that “my cell phone was going to be off but my landline was still reachable” as I had the duty of being their ‘emergency contact.’ After setting everything necessary for motivation, I started to take notes on honor killings and namus while I tried to isolate myself from the outside world. I was going to come up with a systematic summary of all this mass I voluntarily and ‘ineptly’—I was not a professional feminist, and I had constantly regenerating self-doubt—put myself into, I promised. At the end, I came up with pages of notes. Let me share an excerpt from my notes by transferring my handwriting in the typed version:

- “Honor killings are not only about religion, Islam” (Sev’er and Yurdakul 2001)
- “In Turkey some ethnic groups are associated with honor killings. Especially Eastern Turkey, highly populated by feudal Kurdish families, is where honor killings mostly occur. However, there is evidence that metropolitan areas such
as Istanbul or Izmir are main locations where the most of the honor killings occur” (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009, 539). 

- “Honor killings should be called “customary killings” as it points more explicitly to the real issue: the relation between these killings and the socio-cultural background in which they take place” (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009).

- Customary killings can be briefly defined as punishing a woman, generally by killing her or forcing her into suicide, in the expectation of regaining the ‘family honor’ when the family council rules that” (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009).

- “In honor killings, mostly men: a woman’s husband, father, brothers, cousins etc. are involved” (Awwad 2002).

- “An honor killing is a generic term used to refer to the premeditated murder of preadolescent, adolescent, or adult woman by one or more male members of the immediate or extended family” (Sev'er and Yurdakul 2001)

- “In some cases, taxi drivers, neighbors, and mosque members prevent the targeted woman from fleeing, report her location or hinder police investigation” (Chesler 2009). [In Turkey there is nothing called mosque members similar to a church congregation. Usually neighbors and mosque members are the same group—latter of which is mostly all male while the former includes women]

- “Usually, a family council decides the honor killing” (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009)

- “Despite the feudal and patriarchal nature of honor killings, generally one older woman family member agrees to and approve the killing” AND “This shows that honor culture can reproduce itself in daily life without challenge from its female members, who are structurally located in subsidiary roles in every aspect of life” (CITATION) (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009, 548). [Finally someone talks about the role of women as an active agent. DO NOT FORGET TO CITE]

- “Women themselves believe in the naturalness of gender-based social inequalities and the value of complying with violence or tolerating coercion” (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009) [Nuray and maybe her sister?].

- “This violence against women is practiced by both the men and older women of the family despite the fact that there is no benefit for female members … in preserving that culture, while abolishing it would be very beneficial for them (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009) [preserving it can also be beneficial for women. Especially for those for whom other’s dishonor means the value of their namus]

- “Some mothers collaborate in the murder in a hands—on-way and may assist in the gateway” (Chesler 2009, 4). [AWESOME. What I needed. Definitely cite this]

- “namus is a type of sexual honor that presupposes physical and moral qualities that women ought to have. This type is associated with the shame of
women and women’s families …Women must protect their namus for the duration of their lives—more specifically, before, during, and after marriage. Women are also expected to protect the namus of other women and girls related to them, for example, their daughters and granddaughters. Moreover, namus has an additional hereditary quality, whereby, the shame of mother is transmitted to the children. (…) the greatest dishonor of a man derives from the impurity of his wife” (Sev’er and Yurdakul 2001, 973).

- “A woman’s sexuality, therefore, is deemed a force to be controlled by the woman herself. However, namus is much too important to be trusted to women alone. Fathers and other male kin before marriage exercise full rights to sanction women who deviate. Husbands and their male kin assume this task during marriage and even after its dissolution” (Sev’er and Yurdakul 2001, 973).

- “Virginity is still viewed as a crucial indicator of purity and chastity” (Parla 2001) [awesome, cite]

- “The dominant value in the patriarchal system is “namus” or honor, which is maintained in large part through men being in control of the sexual behavior (chastity) of the women in the family” (Kagitcibasi and Sunar 1992) [CITE CITE]

- “Female chastity and modesty are considered essential components of the family’s honor” (Baker, Gregware, and Cassidy 1999).

- “Honor is one’s worth in one’s own eyes and in the eyes of the others. In cultures high on honor orientation, both men and women are responsible for maintaining personal collective honor” (Cihangir 2012, 321). [AWESOME CITE THIS]

After long sessions of reading and note-taking, it was time to go back to my notes and see what I had. My remarks on certain citation or notes, made me stop for a while. As the excerpt includes just a few of them, next to certain quotes or notes, I had written “AWESOME! CITE.” I alienated myself from the ‘human aspect’ of my research, I suddenly thought. I did see the ‘killing’ or the ‘human’ hidden somewhere in the sentences but merely regarded those sentences as “awesome citations” to be included in my chapter. However, as those women whose lives and deaths were the topics of the articles I, myself, was in fact affected by the ‘honor culture’ of Turkey somehow.

“Shame on you! What will others think of you?” is a common disciplining or educating statement among most of the Turkish parents. The reason for the popularity of this statement is that traditional families warn their children against the danger of
shame or the importance of other’s perception as one of the most important indicators of one’s social status in the society (Kagitcibasi and Sunar 1992). Although both gender groups are disciplined with the fear of public-shame, I do not think that anyone would dispute the fact that girls are controlled within the ‘rules of honor’ more. Unlike the male generation, the women in Turkey have to control their namus, which is predominantly about sexual behavior, as well. They have extra an extra burden!

After reading the impact or meaning of “Shame on you” as a traditional parental tool, I remembered about a piece, I bookmarked to read later. I searched it on my e-reader and found Shafak’s (2011) essay on “Turkey and Honor” on The Guardian

Shafak writes,

There are several words in the Turkish language for honor, each with different connotations. Male honor, namus, is defined through women. When a woman does anything degrading she brings shame to the entire family. The word onur is more masculine and is used in matters related to one's country, patriotism and so on. The word sheref can be both male and female, and it is this kind of honor that we refer to when we make a toast at a party. Most importantly, different criteria of honor are applied to different sexes.

Since my childhood I have heard more than once old women advising young women to be modest. Traditionally, females and males are thought to be cut of different cloth. Women are cut of the lightest cambric whereas men of thick, dark velvet. The color black doesn’t show stains, unlike the color white, which reveals even the tiniest speck of dirt. A woman who is believed to have lost her modesty is at times worth no more than a chipped coin. There are always two sides of the coin: dignity or disgrace, and little consolation for those who get the wrong side.

After Shafak’s essay, I found myself thinking about my stories and my sisters’. I certainly can say that my sisters some ‘extra pressure’ of being female. And I do not feel comfortable sharing my own memories. Yet, “Shame on you! Do not repeat it again.
Your father gets so upset” was a sharp warning from my mother right before I went to school when I was at first grade. I remember crying on my way to school and back home. So honor was about others, and it is each and every family members’ responsibility; no matter how old you are and even the ‘nicest’ parent can break your hearth to keep the honor safe.

I am well aware of the fact that until now the text is quite ‘muddled.’ It is not very well organized. I am also aware that I could start with the contested definition of honor, its social indicators, and then continued with honor of the women, social status of the women, and the causes of honor killings in Turkey. Finally, I could discuss the issue of agency in honor killings and formulate my discussion that men are not the only perpetrators but women could also be violent agents, at least in generating or maintaining the discourse of violence or othering, in the issue of honor (killing). Yet, the issue of *namus* or honor killing is ‘messy.’ Violence against women in Turkey, especially for the sake of ‘cleaning someone’s honor,’ is troubling. Yet, let me summarize or tidy up the mess a little bit.

Turkish culture is considered to be one of the Mediterranean cultured that is characterized as ‘honor culture’ or ‘culture high on honor.’ In these cultures, honor is based on one’s own self-perception and how the others or the rest of the society perceives her or him. Although individual honor is defined by one’s position in the society, one’s honor is consequential for and affected by the honor of the entire family s/he is a member of. So one’s honor is co-possessed by the entire family. This results in the ‘guardianship’ of an entire family over individual honor. For women, honor, in general, and *namus*, in particular, is a social-status that needs to be protected.
especially through ‘approved sexual behavior’ that regulates various aspects of their life ranging from a proper dress code to marriage or divorce. Namus, which can be described as honor in respect to a family’s sexual integrity or morals concerning sexual behavior, is mostly preserved through women’s compliance with strict codes of behavior. In most of the cases, women virginity—which is biologically possessed or lost by the women but socially owned by the entire family, both men and women—is still one of the most important indicators or sexual purity or namus. Women’s compliance with the socially allowed behavior is, as the literature suggests, ‘encouraged’ or ‘enforced’ by a wide variety of actors including mostly male members of the family—nucleus or large—and others such as neighbors or a local taxi driver. In some cases, women family members—elder women—are considered in the social mechanism of controlling other women, their namus, and family honor. Women participation in the preservation of honor is usually considered as to be active at the stage of ‘cleaning family honor’ or ‘namus’ once mis-sexual-behavior, which can be going out with boys or pre-marital sex, of a woman member of the family dishonor herself, but more importantly her entire family. This active participation of women is mostly considered limited to their roles in ‘deciding’ whether, well mostly how, to kill or force a ‘woman-of-shame’ to commit suicide, and protect the murderers from the judicial system. Hence, women are mostly considered as victims or rather minor participants compared to men in honor killings in Turkey. Turkish women, who are sometimes punished by death in cases of lack of sexual prudence or lack of namus or suffer isolation—if they are lucky (!), are symbols of family honor owned by the entire family and they are ‘minor’ actors before, during, and after honor killings.
Is that it? Are Turkish women really mere victims of the honor system of an honor-culture or ‘little players in the game?’ Are they really better of overcoming the patriarchal structure that they vastly suffer within? I do not think so. The images of the Other women among some Turkish women indicates that women are not mere victims or ‘little players.’ Their perception of the other women as lacking decency or honor, I believe, stems from the fact that their honor depends on the dishonor of the other women. Honorable women do not suffer from the codes of the society but also benefit from them by achieving a higher status vis-à-vis Other women, both other Turkish women and particularly women living in Other, Western, societies.

Sticks and Stones May Hurt! Words Can, Too!

The literature on women in Turkey, namus, and honor killings focus on issues such as violence against women, the socio-economic structure the status of women is located within or the customs according to which woman body or life is controlled by the male intimates. They have little or no room for the agency of the women or problematize the roles Turkish women play.

In Turkey, the modernization project has impacted individual lives that have been subordinated to the prosperity of the ‘modern state’ and the status of women has been an exceptional priority in this process. However, the visibility granted to women was limited to a space whose borders had already been precisely defined by the state (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009, 541). Modern Turkish women is ‘projected’ or ‘designed’ to be Western in public but Eastern at home; someone who can be involved in a man’s world and has a modern persona, but who should also simultaneously be – or remain – ‘a good housewife and a compassionate mother’ (2009, 542-543). They were objects of a patriarchal modernization project (Onur İnce, Yarali, and Ozsel 2009,
They were individuals to fit the ‘gender roles,’ they were not agents to choose. In this respect, unfortunately, the studies on honor (killings) do not go beyond the modernization project in Turkey. Women are not even given the possibility of not conforming to gendered roles such as ‘innocent victims’ of the patriarchy.

Going back and forth between my IR readings—most of which are about clear examples of violence and feminist writings—and the honor killings, especially in Turkey, I found the notion of ‘violent women’ as more interesting. As Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, 2) remind us:

A conservative interpretation of gender sees women as peaceful and apolitical, a liberal view understands women as a pacifying influence on politics, and feminists who study global politics often critique the masculine violence of interstate relations. Women’s violence falls outside of these ideal-typical understanding of what it means to be a woman. These women fall into the historical categorization of ‘bad’ women (Summers 1975).

Although the stories I shared are not explicitly related to inter-state peace or pacification of global politics, the women I had the chance to converse with or their perceptions of honor or namus are considered within the limits of “ideal-typical understanding of what it means to be women.” Their ‘violent words’ about Other women are not even considered as ‘bad women.’ The current understanding of honor and the lack of interest in tension between women-of-honor their images of so called women-of-shame is I believe a result of (academic) culture of “feminization,” which exemplary images of the Other among Turkish women clearly challenge.

Sjoberg (2013, 147) summarizes Peterson’s concept of feminization as:

V. Spike Peterson accounts for feminization as “devalorization: Not only subjects (women and marginalized), but also concepts, desires, tastes, styles,
“ways of knowing” … can be feminized—with the effect of reducing their legitimacy, status and value. Importantly, this devalorization is simultaneously ideological (discursive, cultural) and material (structural, economic). … This devalorization normalizes—with the effect of “legitimating”—the marginalization, subordination, and exploitation of feminized practices and persons … the “naturalness” of sex difference is generalized to the “naturalness” of masculine (not necessarily male) privilege, so that both aspects come to be taken-for-granted “givens” of social life” (Peterson 2010).

As described in another study, feminization is “the naturalization and/or expansion of traditional(ized) gender roles and a tool for projecting (devalued) femininity onto traditional masculine subjects and Objects” (Sjoberg and Tickner 2011). So let me pause briefly and explain ‘where feminization is’ in the stories or the studies that are interested in the issue of honor.

First, there is not even the probability of women ‘actively’ deciding or shaming the women who do not comply with the honor codes of the society. They are all considered as ‘supporting characters’ for men. Men are pictured or conceptualized as the key agents over women body and honor, and the ‘possibility’ of women’s role in violence is almost ignored, both theoretically and empirically.

Second, while studies on women in Turkey and honor, in general, has the moral or political goal of ‘liberating’ women from the oppression of patriarchy, they regard them as mere ‘sufferers’ of the system and the ‘gender roles.’ They consider the women who support the killing of women bringing shame to the family as ‘irrationally’ suffering from the honor culture or the patriarchal structure. They are seen merely controlled by the male mindset. They do not even give a chance to the idea that those women can ‘rationally’ benefit from the honor culture by comparing themselves to the women-of-
shame, hence gaining higher status. They might be agents ‘playing the game according to the rules’ and achieve the equilibrium, in which pro-patriarchy agents achieve an efficient outcome. From a radical feminist point of view, which aim at overthrowing the patriarchy over women (and all other individuals), this choice of women might not be pareto efficiency, but, at least, it can be argued that some women can be ‘better off’ by ‘rationally choosing’ to comply with and enforce the codes of honor. In short, their violent behavior towards women-of-shame or their discourse of shaming should be considered as defects in their ‘women nature’ but as agents functioning in a structure.

One of the highlighted remarks in one of the leading studies that directed my interpretation of the stories of women from my fieldwork was the following: “… women who commit violence have been characterized as anything but regular criminals or regular soldiers or regular terrorists; they are captured in storeyed fantasies which deny women’s agency and reify gender stereotypes and subordination (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, 4-5). Although the ‘seriousness’ or ‘degree’ of violence against women who bring shame to the family by women who obey the codes of honor is ‘different’ than the violence conducted by a terrorist, the subordination of the role of women as violent or denial of their agency is similar. “The current political culture of storytelling about women’s violence,” Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, 17-18) argue with reference to Snider (Snider 2003, 356), “excludes the possibility that a violent woman rationally chose her violent actions. (…) The traditional female offender is pictured as either innocent or irrational because of her gender, much like the traditional image of a woman portrays her as unable to think, reason, or work like a man.”
Those Turkish women who maintain a discourse opposing or underestimating the value system of the Other women are ‘normal.’ They are normal in the sense that their points of view should not be considered as mere result of their oppression by the patriarchal honor culture. In more extreme cases, many women with diverse social or economic backgrounds resort to violence as a result of their political dissatisfaction (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007, 3). Hence, violence can well be means for women to achieve goals including ‘higher social status.’ “Women, like men, sometimes commit senseless and heinous acts out of depravation or some other socio-economic motivation” (2007, 4). So there is no reason that women can’t maintain violent or ‘hostile’ representation of the Other women intentionally for some ends they desire or benefit from.

Representation of the Other among Turkish women, I believe, is a clear example of achievement of self-glory through ‘bad images’ Turkish women harbor via the honor codes they are structured within to have high-social-status.

My mother’s neighbor and my friend’s neighbor discriminated against women who were not virgin. For the latter, not being a virgin was a lower status of morality and it was unacceptable for her son to marry a girl of ‘shame.’ A college campus, resembling the life Western life style in terms of ‘perceptions’ of pre-marital sex, especially among the women students, was in fact not a place for ‘marriage-girls.’ Were they different than a man who believes that there are two types of girls, one to have fun with and the other to marry? I do not think so. In any case, women having a different perception of sexual purity are of lower-status. For my mother’s neighbor, virginity of a man was different than the virginity of a woman. In fact, there is no issue of virginity for men. Hence, a widow man is different from a widow woman who can marry anyone. She was quite
sure that a woman should have not been concerned about a man’s past while a man
should have.

Zehra was brought her daughter with ‘manners’ of spending her time between
her apartment and school so that she does not bring shame to her family. Zehra was
also quite sure that a Turkish man would be better if she found a decent Turkish girl to
marry. She advised staying away from foreign girls. So did my aunt. My aunt was really
proud of having worked in Germany. She believed that the status of women in Germany
was much better, at least during her residence in Germany. She also indicated that the
German women might have been beautiful and attractive when they are young. But,
eventually, their lack of decency, she added so many times, turn them into uglier
women when they pass their twenties. Besides, German women were never faithful,
she believed, Unlike Turkish women, they had no respect for the institution of marriage
or family.

Zehra and my aunt were typical examples of women who would consider a
foreign woman as immoral. Their approach to a woman who goes on dates before
marriage or with multiple partners before or after a marriage is that “she is not a
‘marriage material.’” Foreign woman lack decency, honor, namus, or dignity because
they are mostly promiscuous. This is an unfortunate form of representation of the Other
woman. Well, unfortunately, it is a truth for so many Turkish women, and a lot of Turkish
guys.

Didem, who identified as a modern woman with a Western worldview,
complained about stereotypes that she had to live with. She was seen less respectful on
the buses because of her clothes. She also had a tone of underestimating the other
women in Turkey. When are we going to internalize the principle of ‘personal choice?’ she repeated with the hope that ‘women one day just see issues of marriage or pre-marital sex as a matter of individual choice.’ She complained about the government for creating new obstacles on top of the existing setbacks for women that were created by religious and cultural taboos.

Gonca, a proud stay-home-mother, believed that women, by nature, were more capable of doing the delicate work, not men. She was very confident in the necessity of a strong heterosexual family structure for next generations who ‘share the world.’ Yet, the world she envisioned was definitely not a place for women who choose to work at the expense of looking after their families or non-heterosexual couples. Besides, she indicated that if her children were to choose a non-mainstream partnership, she would have punished them before her husband would. She also considered Western or American TV shows as ‘dirtying’ the decency of younger generations. Her example her niece having started to act as an “easy girl” as a result of some American shows was his proof.

Finally, Nuray, her sister, and Yasemin all agreed that women had more freedom in America. They also agreed that they did not have a life in Kayseri. Proper dress one of the main points of their conversation and while Yasemin argued that she should have been free in whatever she wanted to, she was exposed to the micro-scale of ‘shaming’ even our conversation. Nuray and her sister, Reyhan, both agreed that clothing in a certain way, as most of the Westerners do, was signaling sexual ‘easiness’ or showing lack of decency and honor. They also agreed that no matter how decent Turkish women
could be and showed it by their life styles the society especially men had a lot to learn to show some respect to women.

Although these women do not conduct any atrocities, their words are harbor bits and pieces of dislike or underestimation of Other women. They are, I believe, harbor hatred. Using patriarchal images of women, their self-dignity is always described in comparison with some other women who lack the virtues that they themselves have. There is a clear lack of solidarity on the basis of ‘being a Turkish woman.’ There are some good Turkish women and some bad Turkish women according to them. However, when they start reporting ‘bad images of the Western women,’ their discourse adopts the term “Turkish women” as an honorable unified entity. The presence of appearance of the Other women triggers a more glorious and stronger women-self.

**No Honor without Dishonor**

I authored this chapter with gender-lenses, Turkish women are the main protagonists. Their self-perception of dignity and images of the Other women as lacking honor is the general theme of representation of the Other I wanted to write about since the very first weeks of my fieldwork. These women are located within a culture that is popularly called culture of honor in which ‘family matters’ the most and each family member, especially men, are responsible for the preservation of family honor. Namus, a particular form of honor, depends on women’s sexual prudence and their compliance with the strict codes of behavior regulates women’s life—from how they should dress to whether they should marry or stay single after loss of their husbands or a divorce. In many cases issue of honor and namus leads to honor killings, which are means of
clearing a family’s honor by the death/murder of the women who behave outside the ‘allowed space conduct’ for women.

The existing literature draws the conclusion that in most of the cases male family members are the main actors in deciding on honor matters with the exceptional cases in which sometimes older woman family members or mothers of ‘misbehaving’ daughters ‘take part’ in crimes against women. The issue at stake is pictured as if women are all sufferers or victims with ‘minor agency’ and women do not gain any benefit from patriarchy. Falling short in understanding or giving the chance that women can be violent or rational agents within patriarchy and assuming that all women are forced to comply with patriarchal honor-codes, most of the studies ignore women agency in matters of honor or self-other images.

When Turkish women’s stories or their perception of the Other women I shared are considered, it contributed to our understanding that women can be agents benefiting from the structure they are situated within. Their stories or their self-perception indicate that Turkish women tends to gain self-respect or preserve their dignity, hence superiority, via patriarchal woman images and vis-à-vis the women in ‘other’ societies. I believe that this indicates the weakness of solidarity among some Turkish women and their international co-genders. Their hostile images of the Other women resemble an interaction where being a decent Turkish woman necessitates the constant presence of a set of women that lacks the virtues necessary for being a proper woman. I believe and emphasize, once again, that the impact of the structure that shapes or limit women’s choices of self-perception can be problematized and this goes beyond the scope of my chapter. However, given the fact that women maintain their perceptions in certain
structure, I believe the overall picture of representation of the Other among the Turkish women once again reminds us how women should not be regarded as mere victims of male-dominated world but should be considered as ‘agents’ that can be the protagonists in/of the patriarchal relations.
CHAPTER 7  
CONCLUSIONS

Writing is not an End

Writing about my Self was exhaustive. It is a tiredness that is not only due to the usual hard work a graduate program requires. The process of centering my self in the middle of my research topic and the constant questioning of my own past and present; my life, has added to the exhaustion. The constant struggle to understand the ‘hidden’ in my daily life or question the normal that I have socialized into was rigorous—if any one needs any form of ‘statistical significance’ as the proof of ‘rigorous research,’ I do not have it, though. Authoring an autobiographical at-home-ethnography needed meticulous effort, first, in not doing any injustice to the stories, and, second, in telling those stories in a way related to my research by accepting my ‘interpretive’ role.

Sometimes, I found myself telling my advisor, “I am sorry. I can’t write these days. I know I am late but I just can’t write anything.” More than understanding and helpful, my advisor, Dr. Ido Oren, was more patient than I was in waiting for these pages.

Sometimes, I completely ‘ran out of memories.’ My lack of memories was not because I suffered from amnesia. It was because I was not always ‘ready’ to share. Some stories I put into words became parts of this dissertation after I occasionally spent at least a couple weeks to frankly face my own wounds.

Sometimes my daily life was a mess due to my dissertation. With professional worries of crafting an autobiographical IR, I was ‘hunting’ instants that could be integrated in my dissertation. On occasions, everything and everyone was a ‘material’ for my dissertation. Even on days I tried get away from my dissertation, I found myself
taking notes of daily ‘incidents’ that added to my meaning-making of the scholarly literature and my surrounding—including my field work. This had some unavoidable negative impacts on my daily life.

My dissertation raised some personal animosities. I started to ‘other,’ for instance, a close friend of mine because I thought he was full of hatred to certain religious groups. I even refused to include her stories in my dissertation as I started to question the sincerity of our friendship. I suffered from regrets, for instance, for not standing against the stereotypes a Kurdish friend of mine suffered while we were in college. I regretted for ‘proudly staying apolitical towards’ or ‘ignoring the human aspects’ of politics I studied for so many years.

I learned a lot about my own prejudices or my own discourse. I became more conscious about the ordinary language I use and how it incorporates ‘innocent’ bits and pieces of ‘othering.’ I certainly owe gratitude to my interlocutors for sharing their stories and thoughts, which helped me, question myself and share my own interpretation with the hope that other people, at least, learn about their self.

**What is Learned?**

Turks are always proud of themselves for being the bridge between the West and the East. Considering the Turkish culture as a fusion of modern Western world and the traditional Eastern culture, Turkey always portrays itself as a unique secular democracy. The international brand of bridging the contrasting worlds of the East and the West portrays a flawless synthesis. Yet, as my analysis of the images the ordinary of people hold about their Other indicates the Turkish society is far from achieving steadiness in the identity market. In other words, the Western and the Eastern world are not blended in together evenly, as the ‘official’ image of Turkey in international relations tries to
prove. Being Westerner seems to be a mission every Turk is born with. Almost
everyone had a desire to be a member of the ‘West’ that they both esteem and resist at
the same time. Eastern ‘labels’ are mostly considered as belonging to the Self and as
traits that needs to be not emphasized as national characteristic. Individuals seem to
have socialized to be as Eastern as they could be in their private lives. Apparent
especially among my women interlocutors, ordinary Turks had stories of being
Westerner on the Street and Easterner at home. Therefore, there is a public self and
private self each of which matches their own other, official and private other. This
results in a permanent ambiguity of identities in Turkey.

In relations to the ambiguity about the Self and Other, there was no clear single
Other for the ordinary Turks. I expected my interlocutors, depending on their religiosity
or life style, to identify Islamic society or the Western world as their Other. As I
discussed, individuals reported different degrees of being Easterner or Westerner or
having different Others. In other words, I was expecting them to identify a precise Other
for ‘their self’ and center our conversations on this particular Other. Yet, almost
ubiquitously their othering was partial. That is, one entity could be an inferior Other, for
instance in terms of morality, while it could suddenly be reported as the Self, for
instance due to the similar consumptions patterns.

The impact of the official state discourse on individuals’ perceptions is visible.
One of the most personal conclusions of my dissertation is that observing clear
examples the influence of official discourse on individuals’ daily interactions, I had the
chance to question my own personal discourse. I noticed so many ‘normals’ that I
should have modified in my life as they were not, in fact, as innocent as I thought. I
discovered that so many ‘normal’ attitudes of mine were in fact under the influence of the ontological security concerns of the broader society/country I socialized within. My interlocutors were sometimes my mirror images that I found various commonalities between their words and my life. The scratches on my mind became more apparent. For instance, the distinction between the ‘modern’ and ‘traditional,’ or ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’ as forms of othering in daily life were partial reflections of the ideology of the founding figures of Turkey. And their everyday use is a form of discrimination, I noticed. This, in fact, I later agreed, was significantly related to the formation of a society that is Western in public, Eastern in private. However, this does not mean that the official state discourse is the sole source of people’s perceptions. The stories of my interlocutors clearly indicate that there is a diversity of institutions people use. These sources ranges from ‘tales to rumor,’ ‘family histories to personal experiences,’ or ‘TV shows to personal emotional traits.’

The general picture of the representation of the Other among the ordinary Turks is also related to the literature I discussed in my second chapter. First of all, I need to stress that ordinary people play an active role in creating and maintaining images of the Other. It is not only the key actors that control the discourse. Regimes of truth are thought to legitimize people’s images (Doty 1996, Dunn 2003). However, it should be stressed that it is the locale, as Said (Said 1993) indicates as important, that influence the legitimacy of the regimes of truth. Secondly, studying representation of the Other as a sole product of language could be misleading as Hall (1997) and Mitchell (1990) argued, representation is a practice of discourse that involves various human artifacts. Thirdly, it is true that representation of the Other mostly involves negative images.
Various scholars (i.e. Hansen 2006, Todorov [1982] 1999) argue that assigning inferior traits to an Other is common. It certainly is a reality among ordinary Turks. However, as Diez (2005) argues, positive images of the Other are also present. Most importantly, as the case of ordinary Turks indicate, positive and negative images co-exist in the discourse even within very micro level interactions. Fourth, as the literature suggest, power matters. However, one aspect that needs to be stressed is that power does not shape the images. Certain images are created or maintained as a result of striving for power. In other words, power is not only a means that give birth to certain images but representation of the Other is maintained to reach power as an end. Fifth, I agree with the idea that societies are in constant need of comprehensive accounts of Self and Other, and that is why they permanently in reconstitute their images (Dittmer and Kim 1993, Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002, Laclau 2005). Given the fact meaning of history and archetypes can be diverse, it should be stressed that reconstitution of the identities or images of the Other among the ordinary Turks were usually in line with the archetypes and the historical trajectories (Eliade 1961, Todorov [1982] 1999, Neumann 1999). Finally, spatial proximity is argued to be important in increasing Otherness (Buzan and Wæver 2003, Neumann 1999). This might be also related to the impact of common history or similar life styles. However, I believe, how direct impact a society has on individuals’ life matters more than the geographical proximity. Their emotions and daily concerns, and their relationship with Other societies seem to remove the borders or the nullifying the impact of spatial distance.
Future Journeys

As I started this chapter: Writing is not an end. It is a process during which you notice the mistakes in your research design, regret not asking some question or spending more time on certain stories, and have initial thoughts for further research.

Writing my dissertation, I first noticed that the emphasis on the case-specific research on representation of the Other that existing literature stressed was more important than I had foreseen, Although I thought the scope of my research was as specific as I could design, I realized that I could have narrowed down the limits of my at-home-ethnography to smaller geographical setting. I believe before my fieldwork, my early socialization in IR that emphasized the importance of findings that can be generalized had an impact on my decision not to limit my ethnography further. I think a study that had narrower scope could have reached less but even more detailed accounts of representation of the Other.

Second, using snowball sampling in Turkey, especially in traditional towns, hindered my reach to female interlocutors. It was difficult to be a part of their routines of women who had little or no access to public places such as offices or university campuses. Working with a woman co-researcher could have been an option. However, my research was autobiographical and working with co-researcher would have contradicted it.

Third, the time of my fieldworks was partially determined in accordance with the budget constraints and funding opportunities. The domestic problems of in Turkey and the political turmoil occasionally made people unwilling to converse about certain topics such as the government. Some individuals suspected my ‘real’ intention of conducting research and they chose not to comment on any political issue, including international
relations. The timing of the political unrest in the country was certainly unpredictable. However, a follow up visit in the aftermath of the unrest in Turkey could have been further helpful in reaching diverse images of the Other.

Finally, as a result of my sensitivity in understanding the role of the ordinary in representation of the Other, my focus on agency would have limited my receptiveness to the impact of the key actors such as state leaders, media, or key public figures. My study can be criticized for not paying enough attention to the daily structure the individuals are located within. The scope of my study could have included analysis of key actors and their interaction with the daily lives of individuals. This does not necessarily invalidate the contributions of my study. However, the individual-structure interaction can be closely analyzed in further studies.

Acknowledging these weaknesses of my study, I must admit that working on the stories and writing these pages, I had a couple of regrets. I wished I had pursued more information on certain themes of representation of Other I thought I got the clues of. Firstly, since I came back from my final fieldwork, I keep asking, “Do consumption habits have anything to with people’s images of their Other?” Although I had very limited examples of people considering themselves in solidarity with a broader community based on consumption habits or life style, I thought a large number of my informants ‘affiliated’ not with their income, nationality, religion, et cetera, but what they ‘buy,’ be it a phone, t-shirt, or service. There seemed to be a perception of a ‘Self’ that is composed of individuals that have similar habits. I did not seek further information on this idea or the general trend I thought I had glimpses of. I believe an interpretive study on consumption culture and the Self-Other nexus can be promising. Second, during my
fieldwork, I noticed the importance, for instance, TV shows in bringing together or parting communities away. I had a chance to talk to various individuals in their twenties on, for example, an American show called *Shameless*. Another study can focus on othering and its interaction with a given area of interest such as popular culture. Relying on snowball sampling, I did not limit my sample with younger populations who could have provided information/stories on the role of popular culture due to limited resources. However, a further study could investigate othering under the light of certain issues.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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