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WOMEN ON THE VERGE: EMOTIONS, AUTHORITARIANISM, AND THE NOVEL IN ITALY AND TURKEY, 1922-1936

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In memory of my grandmothers
Sheila Welsh Tuller (1933-2009) and Sandra Sacchi Peruccio (1941-2020),
who always encouraged my love of reading.

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A Note on Translations

Unless specified, all translations from Italian and Turkish into English are my own.

For Suat Derviş's *Fatma'nın Günahı* (*Fatma's Sin*, 1924)—the only one of her works from the 1920s that has not been rendered into Modern Turkish—I used Modern Turkish orthography following the standards of *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (*IJMES*).

The reader will (hopefully) notice that where possible, I used editions of the authors' novels from their year of publication. Where possible, I fixed misprinted accents; for example, in *Annalena Bilsini* (1927), the edition I used printed "sè stessa" instead of sé stessa." I sought to render accents as they would be printed today.

Introduction

> The post-war world favors dictatorship. Bitterly disillusioned about the old institutions which were not sufficient to stop the great catastrophe of 1914, it seeks something new. The old broke down, crushing what was good as well as what was rotten. The new generation is morbidly impatient to see a new world rise overnight.
>
> *Halide Edip, 1929*[1]

Halide Edip's clarion call on dictatorship and political rot echoed loudly in the interwar Mediterranean. Coming to power in 1922 and 1923 respectively, the Italian Fascist and Kemalist regimes sought to reclaim international prestige, overcome legacies of defeat, and remake their nations. Although their dictatorships would not emerge immediately, both Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) and Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] (1881-1938) used the 1920s to tighten their authoritarian grip on Italy and Turkey. Crafting their "new world" took time and opportunity. It also required some cultural and political continuities from the states they replaced: Liberal Italy (1876-1922) and the late Ottoman Empire (1789-1918).

Essential to both the Fascist and Kemalist regimes' power was the maintenance, perpetuation, and intensification of patriarchal gender politics. This dissertation argues that novels written and published by women during the 1920s and early 1930s provide texture and nuance to institutional and archival records, enabling historians to understand some of the emotional outcomes and experience of authoritarian gender politics. Italian authors Sibilla Aleramo (1876-1960), Grazia Deledda (1871-1936), and Maria Messina (1887-1944); and Turkish writers Suat Derviş (1904/5-1972), Halide Edip (1884-1964), and Nezihe Muhiddin (1889-1958) demonstrated a keen awareness that the Fascist and Kemalist regimes continued and intensified patriarchal dominance that harmed women on emotional and material levels. Borrowing from the field of cognitive narratology, which connects the study of narrative with the

[1] Halide Edip, "Dictatorship and Reforms in Turkey," *Yale Review* 19 (1929): 28.

study of the mind, I argue that reading these novels with an emphasis on emotions highlights how the studied novelists critically assessed women's personal and political experiences in Fascist and Kemalist society.[2]

To their reading publics, both past and present, their novels were not controversial; after all, what was political about love and heartbreak? Instead, these authors participated in a culture of public and hidden transcripts through the emotional content of their novels. Political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott argues that the "public" transcript encompasses "the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate."[3] Many of the studied authors engaged in these actions whether Nezihe Muhiddin's pro-suffrage work as the president of the Turkish Women's Union (TKB, *Türk Kadın Birliği*) or Sibilla Aleramo's writing directly to Mussolini for financial support in 1928. Yet when reading these novels alongside these public transcripts, we see that they also created a "hidden transcript" or discourse that occurred "beyond direct observation of powerholders."[4] Using the veil of fiction during a period of extreme censorship and the suppression of opposition, they predominantly wrote novels exploring women's emotional and social challenges in both Italy and Turkey. Since these texts frequently featured plots consisting of familial and romantic troubles, they were not considered "political" in that they did not explicitly discuss specific governmental policies, organized women's movements, or "high," institutional politics. Instead, the "politics" of these novels were revealed in the plots and emotional content that articulated intersections of "social power," such as class,

[2] David Herman, "Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind: Cognitive Narratology, Discursive Psychology, and Narratives in Face-to-Face Interaction," *Narrative* 15, no. 3 (2007): 327.
[3] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.
[4] Ibid., 3.

labor, gender, and race.[5] Their novels did not feature women belonging to pro-suffrage groups or signing petitions denouncing the regimes. Yet if we only read these types of plots featuring high politics, we risk assuming that subordinate groups "essentially lack a political life or that what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular explosion."[6] In their novels, Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin complicated notions of romance, age, and motherhood, writing their politics in a feminist key.

In order to better understand politics and dissent during the Fascist and Kemalist regimes, the historian needs to look to new, perhaps unexpected sources to hear previously overlooked voices. Looking at the writings of these women and reading them within their historical and authorial context, we gain a more comprehensive view of interwar authoritarian politics that many histories overlook. While some of these authors had connections to the suffrage movement, they all were feminist even if they did not call themselves feminist or belong to women's rights groups. Their literature was feminist because they explored the political, social, and emotional challenges of women's daily lives and articulated resistance to the perpetuation of women's subordination under the Fascists and Kemalists. To borrow a phrase later coined by second-wave feminists, the personal was political for these authors. To feel and write emotions as women was a political statement under these authoritarian regimes in the interwar Mediterranean. In the magisterial *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, historian Karen Offen defines feminism as "about challenging male hegemony […]. It is not

[5] Zaretsky in his review "What is Political History?" offers two useful definitions. The first draws from Aristotelian logic and defines politics as including "social power: classes, the sexual division of labor, the role of race, and the like." The second is the "common everyday sense of a set of specific behaviors, such as voting, policy disputes, and party factions." Eli Zaretsky, "What is Political History?: The Question of the Public and the Private," *Reviews in American History* 41, no. 3 (2013): 558.
[6] Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 199.

about making women the same as men, but rather about empowering women to realize their full potential as women without encumbrance."[7] Drawing form Offen's conceptualization of feminism, the novels written by these six women during the 1920s and 1930s were feminist. By analyzing their work as participating in a conversation about challenging authoritarian hegemony, historians can assess how some culturally-engaged women sought political expression and articulated political consciousness outside traditional, institutional political spheres in two constituent states of the interwar Mediterranean.

Reading Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin together in thematic conversations about love, age, and motherhood allows for a reexamination of their literary production and political commitments as mutually constitutive. They used their novels to document the social, emotional, and political subordination of women in their native Italy and Turkey. These authors hailed from different backgrounds, practiced different religions, received varying degrees of education, and possessed distinct worldviews based upon their age and status. What they did have in common, however, were writings whose female characters challenged the authoritarian politics imposed by the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. As their biographies demonstrate, many of the authors under examination here did not consider themselves feminists in historical and contemporary senses; instead these authors wrote as they experienced the world around them, which, though perhaps unintentionally, was profoundly political.

[7] Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 15-16. I should note that Offen does not incorporate Turkey into her Europe because she views Muslim society and culture as very different from the rest of the continent.

Novels and the Archive

There are several archival concerns for learning about these authors, particularly their engagement with women's activism and their relationship to the regimes. In comparison to the other authors, Aleramo, Deledda, and Halide Edip possess larger, accessible documentary source bases in terms of both personal archives and secondary scholarship. Because of Halide Edip's connections to American missionary and education circles, personal letters from 1920s were accessible at both Smith and Amherst Colleges. Several monographs exist on Derviş and Muhiddin: for the former, a biography and the latter a study of her work with the TKB. As such, these texts place greater emphasis on their engagement with organized politics (Muhiddin with the TKB and Derviş with the Turkish Communist Party in the mid-1930s) than they do on the authors' novels in the 1920s and 1930s. In the case of Messina, perhaps the most under-studied of the six authors, few monographs and articles exist. A major exception is a collection of edited letters sent by Messina to acclaimed Italian writer Giovanni Verga in the early 1900s.

Though there is a decided lack of available personal documents for many of the writers dating from the 1920s, institutional archives provide some details about their public lives. The women's groups with which Aleramo and Deledda affiliated—the National Women's Union (UFN, *Unione femminile nazionale*) and the National Council of Italian Women (CNDI, *Consiglio nazionale delle donne italiane*)—have robust archives in Milan and Rome respectively. Within the field of modern Turkish history, much scholarship focuses on women's organizations and the press, particularly because, for many of these groups, their publications remain the only extant sources. The archive of Nezihe Muhiddin's organization, the TKB, was lost or destroyed decades ago; however, issues of the group's journal, *Turkish Woman's Path* (*Türk Kadın Yolu)* survived. Because the Union was an affiliate of the International Woman

Suffrage Alliance (IWSA; now the International Alliance of Woman), issues of the IWSA's official journal *Jus Suffragii* consistently featured updates from Turkey.

Where the personal and institutional archives fall silent for many of these authors, their novels from the 1920s *are* their personal archives. Where possible, this dissertation integrated the available personal and institutional records and read the novels *through* the archive, illustrating how historians can integrate cultural products—novels—into analyses of authoritarian politics. These six women's novels function as records of Italian and Turkish women's struggles for equality and autonomy under the authoritarian and misogynist Fascist and Kemalist regimes.

The 1920s

Predominantly focusing on novels published in the 1920s, this dissertation analyzes works by these authors to illustrate experiences of authoritarianism in Italy and Turkey. Because the Fascist and Kemalist regimes initiated their governance in the early 1920s and were both autonomous sovereign states on the periphery of Europe, they shared significant political and cultural developments that distinguished them from other interwar states. Prior to the First World War, both Italy and the Ottoman Empire suffered from real and perceived geopolitical slights to their international stature. The former was broadly considered the "least" of the Great Powers, and the latter the "sick man of Europe." As a result, Fascists and Kemalists sought to combat the defeats suffered both during and after the war; for many Italians (not just Fascists), the postwar peace process and social upheaval marked their so-called victory as "mutilated," and for Kemalists, the mere idea of the world war signaled the destruction and dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. In short, the 1920s marked a transitional period for both Italians and Turks,

and the Fascists and the Kemalists' coming to power highlighted the opportunities such a situation produced.

The 1920s are often overlooked in scholarship on Italian and Turkish women's literature. In the case of Italy, there is a tendency to focus on works published prior to 1920 or those published in the late 1930s and after.[8] Similarly there are many studies on Ottoman women writers before the establishment of the Turkish Republic and those writing from 1940 onwards.[9] The lack of attention on the 1920s suggests that politics are challenging to parse during a first decade in power when policies and ideology were in greater flux. In the Turkish context, challenges for scholars also arise due to the 1928 language reform; some novels might not have been transliterated into Modern Turkish from the Ottoman script. Still, by studying novels written by women in the 1920s, we can assess politics and experiences that provide a guide into understanding the impact of Fascist and Kemalist gender politics while the regimes were formulating their agendas and solidifying their rule.

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[8] See Santo L. Aricáo, *Contemporary Women Writers in Italy: A Modern Renaissance* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990); Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood, eds., *A History of Women's Writing in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Susanna Scarparo and Rita Wilson, eds., *Across Genres, Generations and Borders: Italian Women Writing Lives* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004); Valeria P. Babini, *Parole armate: le grandi scrittrici del Novecento italiano tra Resistenza ed emancipazione* (Milan: La tartaruga, 2018), Chiara Cretella and Sara Lorenzetti, eds., *Architetture interiore: Immagini domestiche nella letteratura femminile del Novecento italiano – Sibilla Aleramo, Natalia Ginzburg, Dolores Prato, Joyce Lussu* (Florence: Franco Cesati Editori, 2008); and Stefania Lucamonte, *A Multitude of Women: The Challenges of the Contemporary Italian Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008). On occasion, some monographs might include a chapter discussing several works from the 1920s. See Laura Benedetti, *The Tigress in the Snow: Motherhood and Literature in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) and Laura A. Salsini, *Addressing the Letter: Italian Women Writers' Epistolary Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

[9] See Müjgan Cunbur, *Türk Kadın Yazarların Eserleri: Bibliyografya (1928-1955)* (Ankara: Son Havadis Matbaası, 1955); Mehmet Aydın, *Ne Yazıyor Bu Kadınlar: Osmanlıdan Günümüze Örnekleriyle Kadın Yazar ve Şairler* (Ankara: İlke, 1995); Feridun Andaç, *Edebiyatımızın Kadınları, 1* (Istanbul: Dünya Kitapları, 2004); Ramazan Gülendam, *Türk Romanında Kadın Kimliği (1946-1960)* (Konya: Salkımsöğut Yayınları, 2006); and Azade Seyhan, *Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel in a Comparative Context* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2008). Halide Edip's novels published after 1923 are discussed in Bahriye Çeri, *Türk romanında kadın: 1923-38 dönemi* (Istanbul: Simurg, 1996).

Despite both regimes declaring themselves as sharp breaks with the past, their politics throughout the decade demonstrated significant continuities, particularly in regards to gender politics, with heightened misogynist tendencies under authoritarian conditions. Analyzing political events and decisions made by the regimes throughout the 1920s shows that the Fascists and Kemalists were still formulating their ideological identities and platforms. In this interwar moment, Italian and Turkish women writers had an increased ability to imagine possible alternatives to the preexisting gender norms. When these aspirations were denied, these six women's novels presented modes of resistance. Many of the studied authors already had writing careers (whether as journalists or novelists) prior to the *Ventennio* (the twenty-years of Fascist rule) in Italy and the early Republican era in Turkey (1923-1938).[10] Still, particularly in the cases of Aleramo, Deledda, and Halide Edip, literary studies and biographies focus more on their writings before the 1920s. For Muhiddin, scholarship primarily explores her relationship to the Turkish Women's Union, and in the case of Derviş, her relationship to the Communist Party. It is valuable, then, to incorporate their novels from this decade into discussions of Fascist and Kemalist politics. Their novels from the 1920s and early 1930s reveal the political content of their works during this pivotal historical moment, illuminating their subtle yet significant critique of authoritarian gender politics.

Why These Authors?

Though there were numerous women authors to choose from in both national contexts, I set criteria for selecting my subjects for this study. All of the authors had to possess links to a women's elevation/emancipation/suffrage group; the duration, chronology, and level of

[10] My periodization of the early Republican era ends with Mustafa Kemal's death in 1938.

commitment varied. For the Italian authors, they had to publish at least one novel between 1922 and 1929. For their Turkish counterparts, a novel had to be produced between 1923 and 1929. These dates were chosen for the start dates of the two regimes: October 1922 marking the March on Rome and July 1923 as the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne which recognized the sovereignty of the Republic. As a result, these parameters excluded some famous and significant women authors, such as the eminent Italian writer Ada Negri.[11] In the Turkish context, the 1923 starting point excluded Halide Nusret Zorlatuna.[12] By virtue of her romantic relationship with Mussolini throughout the *Ventennio*, I chose not to research Margherita Sarfatti's *The Palace* (*Il palazzone*, 1929). Although Leda Rafanelli published several novels during the 1920s—*Like a meteor* (*Come una meteora*, 1926) and *The Oasis: An Arab Novel* (*L'oasi: Romanzo arabo*, 1929)—her anarchist politics during the 1920s put her in a different conversation than the six authors studied here who negotiated gender politics within established national political systems.[13] Turkish novelist Güzide Sabri Aygün wrote many popular romance novels throughout the 1920s, but I was unable to find any links to women's groups before or during the 1920s.[14] While Aleramo and Deledda had limited personal interactions with Mussolini, these were not intimate romantic connections. Like Aleramo and Deledda, the Turkish authors possessed varying degrees of proximity to the regime. The author with the closest connection to the regime

[11] Ada Negri (1870-1945) was an Italian writer and poet. Her only novel *Stella Mattutina* (*Morning Star*) was published in 1921. Along with Sibilla Aleramo, she was a member of *Unione femminile nazionale*. In 1940, Negri was the first woman elected to the Italian Academy.
[12] Zorlatuna's two novels published in the interwar were *Küller* (*Ashes*, 1921) and *Sisli Geceler* (*Misty Nights*, 1922). See Betül Coşkun, *Halide Nusret Zorlatuna* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2011).
[13] Rafanelli also had a romantic relationship with Mussolini before the First World War. See Andrea Pakieser, *I Belong Only to Myself: The Life and Writings of Leda Rafanelli* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2014) and Barbara Spackman, *Accidental Orientalists: Modern Italian Travelers in Ottoman Lands* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).
[14] Her novels published during the 1920s are *Nedret* (1922), *Yaban Gülü* (1926), and *Hüsran* (1928). See Abide Doğan, *Güzide Sabri Aygün* (Ankara: Kültur Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1993).

was Halide Edip, who worked alongside Mustafa Kemal during the War of Independence. By incorporating Halide Edip's fiction in this analysis, I demonstrate that proximity to power did not preclude critique of gender politics. It is my hope that other historians working on gender and literature in the Early Turkish Republic will integrate additional women authors into discussions of Kemalist politics and culture.

Within the field of Turkish studies, Derviş, Halide Edip, and Muhiddin are predominantly discussed as institutional political figures rather than novelists in the early Turkish Republic.[15] Conversely within Italian historiography, Aleramo, Deledda, and Messina are explored as writers, but not as women engaged with politics. This study strives to show these women as illustrative of the capabilities of resistance politics *and* literature during the interwar period.

These six women never sat in the same room together. In spite of their geographic distance, I read their novels in conversation because they centered women's experiences in authoritarian contexts. For example, by analyzing toxic masculinity in Derviş's *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*, 1923) and *Like Gönül* (*Gönül gibi*, 1928) alongside Deledda's *Annalena Bilsini* (1927), we see commonalities in their politics and criticism of the regimes that transcended national boundaries. Reading the studied authors' novels as "hidden transcripts" demonstrates how they presented feminist voices chronicling and criticizing gender politics of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes in the interwar Mediterranean.

[15] The relationship of their novels published in the 1920s to the early 1930s to their politics is glaringly absent in major monographs on Muhiddin and Derviş: Liz Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş: Efsane Bir Kadın ve Dönemi* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2008); Ayşegül Baykan and Belma Ötüş-Baskett, *Nezihe Muhittin ve* Türk Kadını *(1931*) (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999); and Yaprak Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003).

Traditional – Modern, Women – Men, Femininity – Masculinity

In their efforts to increase Italy and Turkey's international political status and prestige, both regimes framed their political and social aspirations through a series of binaries: "rural – urban, modern – non modern," and particularly in the case of Turkey, "secular – non-secular." [16] In particular, the regimes emphasized their "newness" and modernity. Historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat writes that "at a time of fears about European hegemony […] the fascists proposed a model of modern existence that foresaw a comforting continuity of master narratives of privilege and domination."[17] Where both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal called for the subordination of the individual to the collective, their politics heavily relied on mediating preexisting social and cultural trends through the "new." For both the Fascists and Kemalists, "modern" was the watchword for distinguishing themselves from Liberal Italy and the Ottoman Empire. In order to pursue and achieve their goals, both regimes incorporated increased governmental intervention in the private sphere and mass mobilization within politics.[18] As a result, these efforts saw the manipulation of popular sentiment and consciousness to inculcate their populace to accept and support authoritarian politics.

It is challenging to disentangle notions of traditional/non-modern and modern from conceptions of women and men, femininity and masculinity. In the Fascists and Kemalists' subordination of the individual to the collective, they emphasized specific visions of their subjects on the basis of their gender identity. As the historian Robert Paxton writes, "Without

[16] Rasim Özgür Dönmez, "Coup d'états and the Masculine Turkish Political Sphere: Modernization without Strong Democratization," in *Gendered Identities: Criticizing Patriarchy in Turkey*, eds. Rasim Özgür Dönmez and Fazilet Ahu Özmen (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013), 11
[17] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 3.
[18] Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8.

question fantasies of virility, violence, and domination played important roles in the emotional appeal of fascist movements and regimes."[19] Both the Fascists and Kemalists desired overcoming pervasive feelings of weakness and international geopolitical slights and framed their goals to the masses in staunchly masculine terms. In his examination of Fascism and masculinity, Sandro Bellassai writes, "When such a normative image assumed violent traits, as happened with fascist masculinity, the supposed inferiority of women became doubly necessary […] the masculine ideal of a model of femininity marked by inferiority, obedience and absolute dedication to the family."[20] To maintain their power at the national and international level, the Fascists and Kemalist reaffirmed and intensified patriarchal norms to subordinate women to their goals.

In both Italy and Turkey, the regimes cultivated the notion of an "ideal man" by using the nations' leaders as their aspirational models. Political scientists Cenk Özbay and Ozan Soybakış argue that the Kemalists relied upon socio-affective ties between ordinary men and major figures of the party to establish loyalty to the nation.[21] For the Fascists and Kemalists, their construction of the ideal man and "proper" masculinity heavily echoed long-standing Mediterranean patterns of gender hierarchy and patriarchy. Fascist and Kemalist masculinity embodied strength, virtue, heterosexuality, and the perpetuation of the nation.[22]

Throughout the 1920s, the regimes constructed the feminine ideal for women through the twin frames of domesticity and maternity, and modern cast tradition in new light. Although both

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[19] Robert O. Paxton, "Comparisons and Definitions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. R.J.B Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 556.
[20] Sandro Bellassai, "The masculine mystique: antimodernism and virility in fascist Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10, no. 3 (2005): 326.
[21] Cenk Özbay and Ozan Soybakış, "Political Masculinities: Gender, Power, and Change in Turkey," *Social Politics* 27, no. 1 (2020): 29.
[22] Lorenzo Benadusi, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy*, trans. Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 14.

regimes glorified women as "mothers of the nation," an intensified dichotomy of masculinity and femininity remained central to their social and cultural politics. While the Fascists insisted Italian women continue to uphold traditional labor patterns as wives and mothers, their "new woman" could publicly participate in the spheres of welfare and education, in addition to party work.[23] In many ways, these views were not intrinsic to Kemalist conceptualizations, but the studied novels (particularly by Derviş) demonstrated that men's contempt for women marked public social interactions. Where the Fascist regime never advocated gender equality, the Kemalists would use it as a rhetorical and propaganda tool to assert their legitimacy as a "modern" Western nation. Women – particularly urban, secular, and middle-class – were tools for the Kemalist regime to justify their "progressive" politics. These women were also the focus of Ottoman modernization efforts, but these reforms were cast through terms of the individual subject as opposed to through the collective. Often in studies on the interwar period, the "modern girl" or "new woman" becomes the focus of analysis because she speaks to trends in consumerism, sexuality, and public visibility. As a result, women who were not this archetype are frequently ignored. In many of the studied novels in this dissertation, young flapper-esque figures, ubiquitous in studies of Jazz Age United States and Great Britain, were not prominently featured.

The "new" woman in both Italy and Turkey posed a threat within both societies. The new Turkish woman wore European fashions without wearing the veil; they participated in public culture, whether attending dances or joining the labor force. The idealized Kemalist woman was "neither a high-society woman deemed too Westernized and selfish, nor an ignorant, anti-modern peasant-other"; instead she was "middle class, urbanized, self-sacrificing, loyal to her family and

[23] Emilio Gentile, "Fascism in power: the totalitarian experiment," in *Liberal and Fascist Italy, 1900-1945*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 163.

the nation."[24] Writing for the publication *İkdam* in 1922, Suat Derviş provided her prescriptions for "new" women in the soon-to-be established Republic:

> Let us hope that in these newly opened professional paths for Turkish women, they show the bravery, perseverance, and dignity until they enter them. […] In that path, they must prove their most precious qualities, the beauty of their femininity, charm, reputation, and they must not become mannish.[25]

The Kemalists echoed Derviş's aesthetic goals as a means to prove their "modernity" and their rejection of the Ottoman past, which they argued left women "trapped" behind the veil and in the harem. The Kemalist regime, as a means of differentiation, promoted womanhood and femininity with women citizen-subjects either becoming professionals or maintaining traditional roles as enlightened housewives and conscious mothers of the nation.[26] However, as the Turkish novels studied in this dissertation indicate, the authors expressed that there were multiple ways of defining womanhood and self-autonomy. The regime's efforts to use Turkish women for its own political goals led to the subjugation of the women's movement, denying figures like Nezihe Muhiddin to articulate their views and advocate for women by women.

Through pro-natalism discourse emerging by the late 1920s, both regimes continued to emphasize and glorify the "traditional family" or in many ways "traditional marriage": a man and woman get married and have children. Where previous governments in Italy and Ottoman Empire encouraged mothers to raise their children as good future citizen-subjects, a major transformation was that the regimes called for quantity over quality throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Both the Fascists and Kemalists articulated women's sexuality existed solely for

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[24] Dönmez, "Coup d'états and the Masculine Turkish Political Sphere," 9.
[25] "Ümit edelim ki, Türk kadınlığı önüne yeni yeni açılan bu meslek yollarında o yollara girinceye kadar gösterdiği cesaret, sebat ve vakarla ilerleyecektir [...] O yolda en kıymetli meziyetlerini, kadınlıklarının güzelliğini, füsununu, şöhretini ispat etmeğe ve erkekleşmemeye gayret etmelidirler." Suat Derviş, *İkdam* (21 Teşrinievvel 1338 [1922]), 3 quoted in Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 74.
[26] Özbay and Soybakış, "Political Masculinities," 32.

procreative purposes.[27] In their critique of the Kemalists' "state feminism," Ayşe Durakbaşa and Aynur Ilyasoğlu write that "Women fiction writers have long been better than historians at highlighting the personal crisis that women had to solve as they as they adopted the new ways of socializing with men."[28] Yet novels written by Turkish women *during* the 1920s and 1930s showed that, for many women, this personal crisis was impossible to solve and caused debilitating psychological and emotional struggles.

The Mediterranean—Why Italy and Turkey?

This dissertation presents a historically and politically contingent reading of six authors' works to present commentaries on authoritarian gender politics during the interwar Mediterranean. Medieval and early modern history emphasizes the centuries of contact and exchange between Italian states and the Ottoman Empire up to the twentieth century, but comparative or transnational studies of the twentieth-century nation-states are largely absent from historical and literary scholarship.[29] However, such a comparative study of Fascist Italy and

[27] Natasha V. Chang, *The Crisis-Woman: Body Politics and the Modern Woman in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 60 and Dönmez, "Coup d'états and the Masculine Turkish Political Sphere," 9.
[28] Ayşe Durakbaşa and Aynur Ilyasoğlu, "Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women's Narratives as Transmitters of 'Herstory' of Modernization," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (2001): 195.
[29] See Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople: Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Cemal Kafadar, "A Death in Venice (1575): Anatolian Muslim Merchants in the Serenissima," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (1986): 191-218; Stephen Ortega, "Across Religious and Ethnic Boundaries: Ottoman Networks and Spaces in Early Modern Venice," *Mediterranean Studies* 18 (2009): 66-89; Maria Pia Pedani, *In nome del Gran Signore: Inviati ottoman a Venezia dalla caduta di Costantinopoli alla Guerra di Candia* (Venice: Deputazione di storia patria per le venezie, 1994); Maria Pia Pedani, *Venezia porta d'Oriente* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2010); Eric R. Dursteler, *Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2011); E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Gabriel Piterberg, et al, eds., *Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World, 1600-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou, eds., *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Konstantina Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800-1850: Stammering the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Julia Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in*

Kemalist Italy reveals larger political and cultural trends in the Mediterranean to which these authors contributed. By holding up Fascist Italy as a mirror to Kemalist Turkey, I highlight critical understandings of gender politics and intellectual women's reactions to these authoritarian contexts. I emphatically reject past nationalistic readings of the Kemalist regime as "feminist" and more progressive than other interwar dictatorial states by virtue of extending the franchise before Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Conversely, reading these Italian writers alongside Turkish contemporaries recognizes the presence of women's resistance to the Fascist project well before World War II.

Numerous archival documents from the Fascist Ministry of Popular Culture indicate that the Italian government wanted a friendly diplomatic and economically productive relationship with the Turkish Republic, particularly following the dictatorial turns following the Matteotti Crisis of 1924 and the Şeyh Said Rebellion in 1925. In January 1927, the Italian government even asked France to reestablish *relazioni amichevoli* ("friendly relations") with Turkey in their efforts to support the international stature of Mustafa Kemal's nation.[30] Just one year later, the French government became concerned with an Italo-Turkish trade agreement over the export of Turkish tobacco to Italy.[31] This positive relationship between the Fascist and Kemalist regimes was a concern for non-authoritarian France, nervous about its geopolitical position both on the continent and in its colonial mandates in the Levant.

Alexandria (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). One exception is Paul Ginsborg's notable recent *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) which incorporates both Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey into a comparative project also including pre-Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Francoist Spain.

[30] Private report, 2 January 1927, Box 156, File 1047, Subfile "January 1927, Ministero della cultura popolare Gabinetto (Archivio generale, 1926-1944) – informazioni riservate, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome, Italy.

[31] Private report, 7 August 1928, Box 157, File 1057, Subfile August 1928, Ministero della cultura popolare Gabinetto (Archivio generale, 1926-1944) – informazioni riservate, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome, Italy.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Italy and Turkey generally sought peace and cooperation, especially in regards to territorial claims in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean. For the Fascists, so long as neither Greece nor Turkey disputed or threatened Italy's claims to Albania, it would be business as usual. Because of tensions with Greece and France, the Kemalist regime actively established stronger political and economic ties with Italy in the late 1920s. In 1929, Turkey contracted naval ships from Italy and junior naval officers were sent to Italy for training.[32] Furthermore, Italy sought to serve as a mediator in Turkish-Greek relations. After Turkey and Greece signed a friendship treaty in 1930, Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras expressed gratitude on behalf of the Kemalist government to Mussolini and his Foreign Minister Dino Grandi for their efforts.[33] In Mussolini's 1933 speech on "The Four-Power Pact" (an agreement between Great Britain, German, France, and Italy), he specifically referenced friendly working relationships with its Mediterranean neighbors; he said that Italy possessed "*years* of practicing a policy of sincere, firm friendship: I speak […] of Turkey and Greece in the eastern Mediterranean."[34] Research by historians Dilek Barlaş, Nicola Degli Esposti, Fabio L. Grassi, and Yücel Güçlü emphasize that Fascist and Kemalist foreign policy featured a relationship that oscillated from "warm and friendly" to "cold" throughout the 1920s and 1930s. These studies, however, focus exclusively on high institutional politics.[35]

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[32] Dilek Barlas, "Friends or Foes?: Diplomatic Relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-36," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 242.
[33] Barlas, "Friends or Foes?," 243.
[34] "Non voglio passare sotto silenzio [la] adesione significativa data dal Belgio al Patto a quattro. Questo Patto interessa direttamente Stati coi quali pratichiamo da anni una politica di schietta, salda amicizia: parlo [...] della Turchia e della Grecia nel Mediterraneo Orientale." Mussolini quoted in *La voce del popolo* (July 1933), 5. Found in Box 2, Ministero della cultura popolare Gabinetto (Archivio generale, 1926-1944) – informazioni riservate, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome, Italy. Emphasis mine.
[35] See Dilek Barlas, "Friends or Foes?: Diplomatic Relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-36," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 231-52; Nicola Degli Esposti, "An impossible friendship: differences and similarities between fascist Italy's and Kemalist Turkey's foreign policies," *Diacronie* [online] 2, no. 22 (2015), DOI: 10.4000/diacronie.1998; Yücel Güçlü, "Fascist Italy's 'Mare Nostrum' Policy and Turkey," *Belleten* 58, no.

The geopolitical (re)alignments of the Second World War and its aftermath frequently define the nature of comparative projects involving the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. The comparison of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany has overridden other compelling transnational comparative projects. Despite the fact that Adolf Hitler rose to power more than a decade after Mussolini, there is a tendency to explore the end of the Fascist regime as opposed to its origins. In other words, the legacy of World War II influences both Italian historical and literary projects; therefore, this dissertation aims to emphasize politics and cultures of the 1920s, when a second world war was far from a foregone conclusion.

In terms of comparing Turkey to Middle Eastern/Islamicate countries, the geopolitical situation of the interwar period would yield tenuous conclusions about the Kemalist era. In recent years, historians have compared the constitutional revolutions in the Ottoman Empire and Iran and Kemalist Turkey to Reza Shah's Pahlavi Iran, but again we see vastly different political situations.[36] Reza Shah belonged to a monarchical system which the Turkish nationalist forces dismantled. Because of invasive foreign trade agreements, Iran had to navigate external foreign influence in a way that Kemalist Turkey did not. Similarly, the Levantine mandates and Egypt were dominated by foreign powers (French and British), and these politics do not represent analogous situations to that of Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey.

Even in the 1920s, international interlocutors (in particular British) compared the two Mediterranean leaders. In 1922 when outlining the "situation in Turkey," diplomat Geoffrey

238 (1999): 813-45; and Fabio L. Grassi, *L'Italia e la questione turca (1919-1923)* (Turin: Silvio Zamaroni Editore, 1996).

[36] See Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Louise Halper, "Disrupted Societies, Transformative States: Politics of Law and Gender in Republican Turkey and Iran, *Hawwa* 5, no. 1 (2007): 90-110, DOI: 10.1163/156920807781787680; and Touraj Atabaki and Erik-Jan Zurcher, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

Knox prophesized, "There is little doubt that […] the future will find his name [Mustafa Kemal] coupled, for all the exiguity of stage on which he won it, with those of Mussolini and Oulianoff [Lenin], as a man—each one supremely typical of his race—who, emerging from the ferment of the world war, by force of character alone, dominated events and reached beyond the wildest ambitions of his youth."[37] In recounting a 1935 trip to Istanbul, Margery Corbett Ashby, the president of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), told her husband, "The Ghazi is a greater statesman than Mussolini."[38] In *Atatürk and the Nazi Imagination*, historian Stefan Ihrig argues that for Hitler and the Nazis, "both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal were rather a package deal."[39] He also notes that prior to the March on Rome, Mussolini edited journals like *Il Popolo d'Italia* and *Gerarchia,* which frequently covered the Turkish War of Independence. The September 1922 issue of the latter—the last issue published before the March on Rome—included an article by Mussolini himself on "*la Marcia di Kemal su Smirne*" ("Kemal Pasha's March on Izmir). Ihrig writes that allegedly, prior to October 1922, "Mussolini apparently liked to call himself 'the Mustafa Kemal of a Milanese Ankara.'"[40] From the start of their regimes through the 1930s, observers in non-Mediterranean European nations recognized key similarities between the two leaders.

[37] P 889/1923: Turkey: general situation, IOR/L/PS/11/231, British Library, London.
[38] Margery Corbett Ashby to Brian Ashby, 3 February 1935, 7MCA/A/033, Papers of Margery Irene Corbett Ashby, The Women's Library at the London School of Economics. In an interview from 1976, she was very complimentary of the dictator, despite his authoritarianism. According to Corbett Ashby, Mustafa Kemal "is the dictator who only had one killing attributable to him." She admired his civilian dress, unlike other dictators who wore military uniform and shared positive thoughts on his literacy campaign. See Margery Corbett Ashby Interview, 21 September, 1976, 8SUF/B/106, Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragists Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews, Women's Library at the London School of Economics. Interview took place at the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square, London.
[39] Stefan Ihrig, *Atatürk and the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 106.
[40] Ibid.

Frequently, modern Italy and Turkey receive little comparative attention, most likely because historians are reluctant to analyze Mediterranean nation-states of different religious confessions. This interpretation—that the histories of a Muslim country cannot be studied alongside a Christian one—upholds less nuanced understandings of Turkish politics in the twentieth century. By shifting focus to gender politics, this dissertation centers the relationship between Italy and Turkey on their interwar experiences and on their common identification as Mediterranean. Within anthropology, there are many studies on the modern Mediterranean, particularly in terms of family and gender dynamics.[41] Yet within history, when the region is examined, it is often broken into Eastern versus Western, or Islamic versus Christian. Notably, in *European Feminisms*, Offen excluded Turkey because it and other Islamic southern European countries are "rooted in a very different set of cultural presuppositions." And yet as Mediterranean nations, both Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey heavily relied upon the paradigm of honor and shame to perpetuate patriarchal power.

Analyzing novels by Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin highlights how their literature confronted authoritarian politics and showed that Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey did indeed share these breaths in the interwar. Within the field of Mediterranean studies, historian Judith E. Tucker notes, women and gender history remains a notable lacuna.[42] Placing these Italian and Turkish women in conversation illustrates the political

[41] See Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology* 10, no. 1 (1971): 1-24; J.G. Peristiany, ed., *Mediterranean Family Structures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); John Davis, *People of the Mediterranean: An Essay in Comparative Social Anthology* (London: Routledge, 1977); Henk Driessen, "Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered," *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2005): 129-41, DOI: 10.1080/0275720042000316669; Christian Bromberger, "Towards an Anthropology of the Mediterranean," *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (2006): 91-107, DOI: 10.1080/02757200600624339; and Naor Ben-Yehoyada, *The Mediterranean Incarnate: Region Formation between Sicily and Tunisia since World War I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).
[42] Judith E. Tucker, "Introduction," in *The Making of the Modern Mediterranean: Views from the South*, ed. Judith E. Tucker (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 7.

nature of their lives *and* literatures and, consequently, the need to integrate women into Mediterranean history in a way that is not reduced to the usual binaries. Furthermore, the emotional content and historical context of the novels' production allow historians to locate voices ignored within the institutional political archive. While these writers represented a spectrum of women's political engagement, their lives and literatures demonstrated a commitment to elevating women's voices in the face of repressive authoritarian politics.

Contributions

The goals of this dissertation are interconnected and threefold. The first aim is to demonstrate that Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey provide a productive comparison for the interwar period. As sovereign Mediterranean nations on the European periphery, their ideological and political challenges demonstrated a goal of overcoming international geopolitical alterity. With the emphasis on the Second World War in the Italian context, Benito Mussolini's perpetual linkage with Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany elides other useful comparisons. Since both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal came to power in the immediate postwar and commenced their regimes in 1922 and 1923 respectively, charting the tensions, ambiguities, and possibilities prior to the 1930s illuminates how these states functioned in a period of profound turbulence and transformation. The second connected goal is the incorporation of women into political histories of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. Frequently women are written out of these studies because of the narrow source base. Since both Italian and Turkish women could not vote during the 1920s, studies of these interwar authoritarian states lack comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how these regimes' politics effected all citizen-subjects. The final interconnected goal is that, in order to write women's politics into these broader studies of the

Fascists and Kemalists, I emphasize how women's cultural production vis-à-vis novels expands the historical archive. Reading novels by Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Suat Derviş, Halide Edip, Maria Messina, and Nezihe Muhiddin highlights women's dissent and critique of the regimes and their continued subordination of not only the individual to the state, but also women to men.

Chapter 1: Personal and Political Lives Before the Regimes

Before analyzing novels by Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Suat Derviş, Halide Edip, Maria Messina, and Nezihe Muhiddin, this chapter explores their biographies in order to understand their personal backgrounds and experiences that would influence their politics and the production and content of their novels. In their "early lives" (i.e. before marriage), these women all grew up in the rapidly changing late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the wake of Italy's unification in 1861 and the Tanzimat reform era in the Ottoman Empire, Italian and Turkish women became part of national discussions about women's roles in these modernizing states.

This chapter then analyzes how the authors' lives and early writing careers intersected with the "woman question" and modernization efforts in Liberal Italy and the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the Turkish authors Derviş, Halide Edip, and Muhiddin, the Italian authors in this dissertation—Aleramo, Deledda, and Messina—have primarily received attention for their literature, not their political engagement (either institutional or unofficial). This critical reading of their childhoods, education, and marriages indicates how things were changing for women in Italy and the Ottoman Empire prior to the rise of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. For these six women, it was not a foregone conclusion that they would embark upon professional writing careers. As a result, understanding their experiences prior to the authoritarian turn in Italy and Turkey in the interwar enables the historian to contextualize and assess how their novels present criticism of and dissent towards the regimes' gender politics.[1]

[1] Inspired by Ralf Schneider quoted in David Herman, "Cognitive Narratology (revised version; uploaded 22 September 2013)," in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, eds. Peter Hühn, et al (Hamburg: Hamburg University), http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/cognitive-narratology-revised-version-uploaded-22-september-2013.

Family Backgrounds

Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Suat Derviş, Halide Edip, Maria Messina, and Nezihe Muhiddin all grew up in the waning years of their countries' "old regimes": Liberal Italy (1876-1914) and the late Ottoman Empire (1839-1922). The Turkish authors all grew up in upper-class households and were raised in Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, whereas their Italian counterparts lived with middle-class families throughout the country. That Deledda and Messina—born on the islands of Sardinia and Sicily—succeeded in becoming published authors despite their familial and sociopolitical contexts spoke to their persistence and the (albeit limited) structural opportunities for female writers in Italy.[2] Similarly, Aleramo grew up in the east-central province of the Marche. These Italian women raised outside of major cultural and political capitals proved that educated young girls could aspire to and, not too infrequently, indeed achieve professional dreams. The six women studied here were all the daughters of educated, professional men and mothers who worked within the home. They belonged to the majority ethno-religious groups of each country and though their social marginalization occurred on the basis of gender, they still belonged to the class of citizens whom the regimes counted among their support base.

The novelists' family backgrounds provide context for their careers and novels written during the interwar. Deledda was born to middle-class parents Giovanni Antonio Deledda and Francesca Cambosu Pereleddu on September 27, 1871 in Nuoro, Sardinia. She described her father as a "man of good culture and unexpected poetry."[3] "Ziu Totoni," as his friends and

[2] As the major Italian islands, many inhabitants of the peninsula and scholars considered Sicily and Sardinia as "backwards." Frequently, studies on Deledda's novels refer to the culture of Sardinia as "primitive." See Antonio Sorge, "Divergent Visions: Localist and Cosmopolitan Identities in Highland Sardinia," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, no. 4 (2008): 810.

[3] On her father, Deledda reported that Giovanni Antonio Deledda "era uomo di buona cultura e poeta estemporaneo; aveva studiato retorica a Cagliari." Stanis Ruinas, *Scrittrici e scribacchine d'oggi* (Rome: Casa editrice Accademia, 1930), 44.

acquaintances called him, had trained as a lawyer. Despite not practicing, he frequently offered legal advice to local townspeople.[4] He was an important businessman and landowner, ran an olive press, and in 1868 was even elected Nuoro's mayor.[5] Although Deledda described her home as often a merry one, filled with guests, folklore, and stories, the family also faced considerable challenges. Deledda's mother was emotionally distant and most likely suffered from depression. In *Cosima*, Deledda charged her mother with coddling her embarrassing and troubled older brothers. Though academically gifted in his youth, Deledda's eldest brother, Santus, also had mental health problems (literary scholar Jan Kozma suggests he had bipolar disorder) and became an alcoholic, squandering the family's wealth.[5] Another older brother, Andrea, added to the family's troubles when he abandoned his studies in favor of gambling and enjoying alcohol and the company of local prostitutes; at one point, he even received jail time for counterfeiting.[6] Yet for all of his profligacy, Andrea supported his sister's writing ambitions; he paid for Italian lessons so that her words could reach a larger audience. Hailing from Sardinia, Deledda's primary spoken language was Sardo, not the standard Italian of her novels. As Kozma notes, within the Nuorese community and the Deledda family, "being a writer was looked upon as a greater scandal than having a chicken thief and an alcoholic for brothers."[7] The young Deledda's professional dreams defied the sociopolitical norms of turn-of-the-century Sardinia; the very decision to become a writer and to strive for a career was Deledda's first form of feminist resistance against traditional Italian gender expectations.

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[4] Martha King, *Grazia Deledda: A Legendary Life* (Leicester, UK: Troubador, 2005), 13.
[5] Deledda touched upon her brother's struggles and her family's reactions to him in her posthumous autobiographical novel *Cosima* (1937). See Janice M. Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's Eternal Adolescents: The Pathology of Arrested Maturation* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 25-6.
[6] Ibid., 27.
[7] Ibid., 27-8.

Like Deledda, Maria Messina did not hail from the Italian mainland. Born in Palermo, Sicily in 1887, her father Gaetano Messina was a school inspector. Her mother, Gaetana Valenza Traina, was the descendant of a baronial family in Prizzi.[8] Her parents were seemingly incompatible, and their struggles were compounded by persisting economic hardships. Messina moved throughout her childhood in central and southern Italy due to her father's frequent work transfers, but the family finally settled down in Naples in 1911.[9]

Sibilla Aleramo grew up amidst parental dysfunction. Born Rina Pierangeli Faccio in the northern region of Piedmont in 1876, Aleramo moved at an early age to Le Marche so that her father Ambroglio Faccio could begin a new job managing a glass factory in Porta Civitanova.[10] Extremely close to her father, she had a more distant relationship with her mother, Ernestina, who, Aleramo would later write in her diaries, had an "extreme sensitivity," which can reasonably be read as depression. In Aleramo's teenage years, Ernestina attempted suicide and eventually remained confined at home.[11] Perhaps unsurprisingly, life in the Faccio household was tense, and her good relationship with her father dissipated. Ambroglio took a mistress and seemingly neglected his family; Aleramo was horrified and disappointed in the man she had once admired.[12]

Unlike the Italian authors who hailed from solidly middle-class families, in Istanbul, Derviş, Halide Edip, and Muhiddin's families would have been considered upper-class and among the city's elite. Halide Edip, frequently the only woman included in the late Ottoman and

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[8] Prizzi is south of Palermo and near Corleone of *The Godfather* fame. Cristina Pausini, *Le "briciole" della letteratura: Le novella e i romanzi di Maria Messina* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2001), 9-10.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Fiora A. Bassanese, "Sibilla Aleramo (Rina Faccio) (1876-1860)," in *Italian Women Writers*, ed. Rinaldina Russell (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 9.
[11] Alba della Fazia Amoia, *20th-Century Italian Women Writers: The Feminine Experience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 16-7.
[12] Ibid., 17

early Republican literary canon, was the daughter of a secretary for Sultan Abdülhamid II, Edib Bey.[13] Born in 1884, she grew up in a stately home with extended family members and servants in the Beşiktaş neighborhood, not far from Yıldız Palace where her father worked. Like Aleramo and Messina, her childhood featured parental turmoil; her mother was terminally ill, and the young Halide Edip even referred to her as "the fading woman."[14] Following her mother's death, she was primarily raised by her grandparents, and her life became further complicated by her father's polygynous marriages. Her stepmothers, called *Abla* (older sister) and *Teyze* (maternal aunt), were jealous of each other and these women, in addition to their servants, created a competitive and combative environment in the Beşiktaş house.[15] Often, she found herself in the middle of these intrahousehold conflicts that had a major psychological and emotional effects on the young girl.

Because of her socioeconomic status, Halide Edip's background differed significantly from that of Derviş, Muhiddin, and most other Istanbulites (men and women). According to Alan Duben and Cem Bahar's collection of marriage data between 1885 and 1907, only 2.29% of married men in Istanbul were polygynous.[16] While Islamic law permits marriages with up to four wives, the man must be able to provide for each spouse equally. Thus, polygynous marriage is very costly and untenable for most men. That Edip Bey had two wives demonstrated his considerable wealth and financial stability that guaranteed a materially comfortable upbringing

[13] Sultan Abdülhamid II (1942-1918) ruled from 1842-1918. Known for his repressive regime, Abdülhamid II did foster elements of modernization with the empire, including the expansion of education, bureaucratic reform, and major public works projects (including the construction of numerous railroads). See M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[14] Halide Edip, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York: The Century Co., [1926]), 5.
[15] Philipp Wirtz, *Depicting the Late Ottoman Empire in Turkish Autobiographies: Images of a Past World* (London: Routledge, 2017), 63.
[16] Duben and Bahar point out that this number was comparatively low against 10-20% among nineteenth-century Mormons. Alan Duben and Cem Bahar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility 1880-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 148-9.

for his daughter. In spite of her socioeconomic circumstances, this familial experience traumatized Halide Edip because she often found herself in the middle of her stepmothers' disagreements. For the rest of her life, she openly opposed polygyny and often advocated against it in both fiction and nonfiction prose.

In comparison to Halide Edip, little is known about Nezihe Muhiddin's early life. She was born in 1889 in Kandili, a community on the Asian side of the Bosporus. Her parents were Muhittin Bey, an Ottoman state prosecutor, and Zehra Hanım, who stayed at home with her children. Her maternal great-grandfather was *serasker* Ağa Hüseyin Pasha, the first head of the Ottoman army's general staff. In the seminal *Kadınsız İnkilap*, historian Yaprak Zihnioğlu says little about Muhiddin's father but according to her daughter, mother Zehra Hanım was a "liberal and intellectual" woman.[17]

Born in Moda, Istanbul in 1904 or 1905, Suat Derviş similarly belonged to an established and well-connected family. Both her grandfather *Kimyager* Müşir Derviş Pasha and her father İsmail Derviş were prominent scientists and educators in late Ottoman Istanbul.[18] The former was one the founders of the *Darülfünun*, the precursor to Istanbul University, established in 1846. After studying abroad in France, Derviş's father joined the medical faculty at *Darülfünun* as a gynecologist. Whereas her parental line possessed a considerable social standing in "secular" society, her maternal lineage possessed connections to the Ottoman palace. Derviş's mother Hesna Hanim was the daughter Kamil Bey (1830-1876), a member of Sultan Abdülaziz's

[17] "Zehra Hanım […] hürriyetperver, aydın bir kadındı." Yaprak Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003), 35.
[18] *Kimyager* Müşir Pasha was the son of an imam and after completing his education in Istanbul, he also studied in London and Paris. Upon returning to the Ottoman Empire, he served as the chief engineer of the Keban and Ergani mines and taught physics and chemistry at *Mekteb-i Harbiye* (the Military Academy) and *Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şahane* (Imperial School of Medicine). Liz Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş: Efsane bir Kadın ve Dönemi* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2008), 15-7.

entourage, and Perensaz *Hanımefendi*, a former slave girl from the palace.[19] Hesna Hanım received an extensive education in foreign languages; in addition to Turkish, she spoke Arabic, Persian, and French fluently.[20] Her children would undertake comprehensive studies. While they both viewed their daughters' education as of paramount importance, the Derviş parents had very different approaches to parenting. İsmail was very caring and nurturing; Derviş once described him as "being like a mother!"[21] Though Hesna Hanım loved her children, she was more distant, rarely showing affection or spoiling them like her husband. Despite this distance, she devoted her life to her husband and children.[22]

These six women authors all grew up in households that upheld traditional middle-class gender role patterns; that is, their mothers did not work outside the home. Despite this conforming to traditional domesticity, four of them—Aleramo, Deledda, Halide Edip, and Messina—grew up amidst significant familial discord. In some of their works, household dramas reflecting their upbringing made their way onto the page. Nevertheless, all six authors were emotionally and professionally supported by at least one family member (a parent or a sibling) to become educated. Because they were able to develop their interests in literature and writing, they were able to pursue writing careers that spanned the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

[19] Behmoaras gives Kamil Bey the title of "mabeyinci" or "chamberlain." Perensaz Hanım was of Circassian descent. See also Fatmagül Berktay, "Derviş, Suat, (Saadet Baraner) (1905-1972)" in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 109.
[20] Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 20.
[21] "Anne gibi bir baba!" Ibid., 30.
[22] Ibid.

Education

Around the turn of the twentieth century, thinkers in both Italy and the Ottoman Empire grappled with the "woman question" and its relationship to education and politics. This concern asked what were the appropriate social roles for women at a time when more and more women were entering the public sphere. Newspaper articles frequently questioned whether women should they be treated equally to men. What were the social, moral, economic, and political obligations toward women in a period of modernization?[23] As a result of these discussions on how most productively to modernize the nation, the "woman question" frequently intersected with policies directed at education reform. At the time of Italian unification in 1861, female literacy was approximately 14% in rural areas and 23% in cities and towns.[24] Throughout the Risorgimento era (1861-70), the middle class, print culture, and educational and labor opportunities for women (predominantly those in urban areas) all expanded; as such, by 1901, female literacy in Italy had improved slightly with 38% of Italian women (rural and urban populations combined) being literate.[24] The Ottoman Empire experienced similar trends from the Tanzımat to the First Constitutional Era (1839-1878). Literacy rate data for the Ottoman Empire is difficult to find, but historians have given several projections. Historian Benjamin Fortna writes that the literacy rate in the 1860s was "as low as 2 percent"; the majority of scholarship coalesces around under 10 percent until the late 1920s.[25]

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[23] See Sarah Gualtieri, trans., "'Should a woman demand all the rights of a man?' From the Cairo periodical, *Al-Hilal*, 1894," in *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History*, ed. Camron Michael Amin, et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 174; Hülya Yıldız, "Rethinking the political: Ottoman women as feminist subjects," *Journal of Gender Studies* 27, no. 2 (2018): 177-91; and Helena Dawes, "The Catholic Church and the Woman Question: Catholic Feminism in Italy in the Early 1900s," *The Catholic Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (2011): 484-526.
[24] Katharine Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism, 1870-1910* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 9.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 20.

In both geographic and political contexts, increases in literacy rates were supported by expanded governmental efforts to broaden educational access.[26] The "woman question" in Italy and the Ottoman Empire interrogated how society could modernize and improve in order for the nation to increase its international standing. While educating women became one method for social improvement, it was frequently not done for women's *personal* and *self*-improvement. Male ideologues, Italian and Ottoman alike, believed that better educated women citizen-subjects would be better mothers and, in turn, their offspring would become better loyal subjects to the state. Still, unlike what would happen in Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey, women's self-improvement was framed in individualized terms.

Though expansion of education might not have occurred primarily for women's benefit, many took advantage of it. In both Italy and the Ottoman Empire, the years 1858 and 1859 saw official governmental support for girls' education. Ottoman girls could attend *rüştiye* (middle schools), and across the Mediterranean in Italy, the *Legge Casati* required two years of free public education for boys and girls.[27] Italian women gained permission to enter universities in 1874, and, in 1883, girls could start to attend *ginnasi-licei* (middle and high schools with classical education) and *istituti tecnici* (vocational high schools).[28] Despite the expanded (and mandated) access to institutional education, enrollment numbers for Italian girls remained low. In 1901-1902, on average, there was only one female student for every 40 males in *licei*, which produced an especially low figure when one considers that fewer than ten percent of all Italian

[26] For the Italian context, see Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers*.
[27] In 1877, the Legge Coppino increased the compulsory years of study to the age of 9. See Salvatore Di Maria, "La questione del Mezzogiorno e la crisi identitaria del Sud," *Italica* 91, no. 4 (2014): 803-830, jstor.org/stable/24368529.
[28] Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers*, 13.

children received secondary education.[29] In 1886, the Ottoman education system established industrial schools for girls (*inas sanayı mektepleri*) at the same time as male equivalents. Teachers' schools (*Darülmuallimat*) graduated their first female students in 1873, and alumnae could work at the various schools for girls throughout the empire.[30]

In comparison to the Turkish authors, the Italian women received significantly less formal education. Despite being the child of a parent working in the education system, Messina never attended school and instead remained at home, learning embroidery and piano from her mother.[31] In her first letter to acclaimed Sicilian writer Giovanni Verga, Messina explained that her teachers were her mother and her "only and beloved" brother. [32] Messina was inspired by the stories she read, telling Verga that his words gave her courage and "launched her into the country of dreams and hopes."[33] Despite her isolated upbringing and lack of formal instruction, Messina clearly observed life with a keen eye and believed that she possessed talent for expressing her views. We can also read her fiction as her way of engagement with a world denied to her because of her parents' adherence to traditional gender norms. Unlike Messina, Aleramo received some formal education. However, her studies ended upon her completion of elementary school when her father, recognizing her intellectual acumen, asked her to work as a bookkeeper in his factory.

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[29] Helena Dawes, *Catholic Women's Movements in Liberal and Fascist Italy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 31.

[30] It is important to note that these schools were established in major cities and were not for children living in rural areas. Elif Akşit, "Being a Girl in Ottoman Novels," in *Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna (London: Brill, 2016), 97.

[31] Barbara Marola, "Maria Messina," in *Scrittrici italiane del primo Novecento*, ed. Barbara Marola, et al (Bolzano: Comitato provinciale per la realizzazione delle pari opportunità tra uomo e donna, 2000), 87.

[32] Giovanni Carmelo Verga (1840-1922) was a Sicilian writer known for works focusing on his native island. He wrote across numerous genres: novels, short stories, opera libretti, and plays. Maria Messina to Verga 6 November 1909, in Maria Messina, *Un idillio letterario inedito verghiano: lettere inedite di Maria Messina a Giovanni Verga*, compiled by Giovanna Garra Agosta (Catania: Greco, 1979), 28.

[33] Ibid.

In addition to supporting the family business, she started to write articles for regional newspapers.[34] These early writings marked the start of an extensive literary career.

In her 1927 Nobel acceptance speech, Deledda explained, "My family contained wise people, but also violent ones and productive artists," yet her parents did not support the writing she began at the age of twelve.[35] When her formal education ended after three years of elementary school, Deledda was determined to continue her studies. She read independently across contemporary national and international literature, including Giovanni Verga, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Walter Scott, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, and Émile Zola.[36] For all the turmoil the elder Deledda brothers caused, they did provide their sister with ways of continuing her education outside of school. When Sardus still studied at the University of Cagliari, he invited his friend Antonio Pau, an admirer and imitator of Gabriele D'Annunzio, to Nuoro. Deledda developed a crush on the schoolboy poet and eavesdropped on the friends' discussions of contemporary literature. For his part, brother Andrea subscribed to magazines in order for the young writer to "keep up with mainland 'culture.'"[36] In spite of considerable social and familial obstacles to gaining an education, Aleramo, Deledda, and Messina found ways to read widely when formal institutional instruction was not an option.

In late Ottoman Istanbul, girls of Derviş, Halide Edip, and Muhiddin's socioeconomic cohort frequently received intensive home educations from private tutors. Because Muhiddin's

[34] Bassanese, "Sibilla Aleramo," 9.
[35] Deledda's speech transcribed by Anders Hallengren, "Appendix B: Grazia Deledda, Voice of Sardinia: The First Italian Woman to Receive the Nobel Prize in Literature," in *Eleonora Duse and* Cenere (Ashes): *Centennial Essays*, ed. Maria Pia Pagani and Paul Fryer (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017), 166.
[36] Kozma, *Eternal Adolescents*, 23.
[36] Ibid., 28-9.

father was reportedly an "open-minded" person, he cared very much about his daughter's education. Muhiddin's studies began when she and her brother attended the neighborhood school; however, her parents became unhappy with the quality of its education. She then received rigorous instruction at home, learning Persian, Arabic, French, and German.[37] She also must have had some instruction in the sciences since her first teaching position was as an instructor of natural sciences at *Kız İdadi Mektebi ve Darülmuallimât*, a secondary school for girls in Istanbul.[38] Muhiddin's transition from student to teacher was the model of a potential, acceptable career path for young Ottoman women seeking professional opportunities.

Unlike Muhiddin, Halide Edip and Derviş's educations continued outside their homes. Halide Edip's memoirs focused significant attention on her childhood and youth; the first volume documented her life growing up in an elite Ottoman household and attending the prestigious American Female College (now Robert College) in Istanbul where she was its first Muslim graduate. With both a grandfather and father who worked in institutions of higher education, Derviş's studies were unsurprisingly of the utmost importance. Educated in France, her father İsmail Derviş wanted to send his daughters to the prestigious Notre Dame de Sion School in Istanbul to learn from French nuns. However, his father-in-law Kamil Bey objected. The older gentleman crowed, "Why should my grandchildren pursue a diploma in this school? For what do they need a diploma?"[39] Had her grandfather or father asked young Suat what she wanted, she might have insisted on attending Notre Dame de Sion; her protagonist in *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*, 1923) was a graduate of this institution. Instead, alongside her older sister

[37] Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkilap*, 35-7.
[38] Serpil Çakır, "Muhittin, Nezihe (1889-1958)," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 356.
[39] Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 35.

Hamiyet, Derviş received a comprehensive education at home, taught by French preceptors and a governess. They studied mathematics, belles-lettres, literature, history, geography, multiple languages—French, Arabic, and Persian—piano, and voice.[40] For high school, she enrolled in a formal institution for the first time, attending the Kadıköy Nunume Rüştiyesi.[41] Additionally, Derviş gained a cultural education by virtue of living in Istanbul; with family and friends, she went to the theater, attended concerts, and viewed art exhibitions.[42] Like their father before them, Derviş and sister Hamiyet also studied abroad, enrolling at the Sterniches Conservatory in Berlin from 1919-1920.[43] She found, however, that her interests were not musical and soon began to attend classes in philosophy and literature in the Faculty of Letters at Berlin University.

As a result of their higher socioeconomic status, these Turkish authors had greater access to formal institutional education beyond elementary school than their Italian counterparts. Though the Italian authors grew up during a period in which the recently unified Italian nation-state sought to expand its school system, they still faced entrenched social norms that did not prioritize the education of women. However, despite their different backgrounds and education levels, reading these six women authors together demonstrates their shared commitment to the elevation of women's status within Italian and Turkish society in a way that transcends class distinctions.

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[40] Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 36. On her home instructors, see Nurmelek Demir, "Suat Derviş: Une intellectuelle francophone de la Turquie modern," *Littera*, 50.
[41] Pınar Uçarlar, "Suat Derviş (1903-1972)," in Suat Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2016), 3.
[42] Demir, "Suat Derviş," 50.
[43] Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 80. The Stern Conservatory of Music in Berlin (*Sternsche'sches Konservatorium der Musik zu Berlin*), now part of the Berlin University of the Arts (Universität der Künste Berlin), was founded in 1850. At the time of Derviş's attendance, the conservatory was headed by Alexander von Fielitz. For an in-depth study of the conservatory, see Cordula Heymann-Wentzel, "Das Stern'sche Konservatorium der Musik in Berlin: Rekonstruktion einer verdrängten Geschichte," (Doctoral thesis, Universität der Künste Berlin, 2014).

Love, Marriage, and Divorce

Across Europe, conceptions of love and marriage transformed over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In both Liberal Italy and the late Ottoman Empire, political discourse emphasized liberty and love as means to counter both the autocratic state in the public sphere and the equally autocratic father in the private one. Love and free marriage choice became integral elements of novels—popular and elite—and plays that would shape discussions of the role of the family and the orientation of the citizen-subject to the Ottoman and later Turkish state.[44] Intellectuals debating the "woman question" frequently criticized arranged marriages as oppressive and opposed to the ideals of older generations. But as Duben and Bahar noted, "Love was a dangerous business. Not just because it subverted the authority of parents, but because, as a result, it also undermined the moral foundations of society."[45] As subsequent chapters on romance and age will demonstrate, marriage was essential to Fascist and Kemalist social engineering. In the popular press, the private sphere became even more intensely scrutinized and coopted by the state. In order to be responsible and productive citizens, men and women needed to marry.[46] After marriage, they would then produce new loyal members of the nation. Because their novels prominently featured plots surrounding romance and heartbreak, understanding the relationship these authors had to the institution of marriage enables historians to flesh out personal and political commitments and read love and heartbreak as a critique of authoritarian gender politics.

For Sibilla Aleramo, marriage was a tragic affair. At the age of sixteen, she married Ulderico Pierangeli, her father's clerk, after he raped her. In addition to the Catholic Church's

[44] Duben and Bahar, *Istanbul Households*, 88-9.
[45] Ibid., 92.
[46] Ibid., 106.

ban on divorce, Italy's 1865 Pisanelli Civil Code determined that it was also illegal in civil practice. Whereas courts could annul a marriage if the wife was not a virgin, no concessions were made in the case of rape or anything else, and therefore an Italian woman had no legal recourse.[47] Like her mother, Aleramo suffered from severe depression or bipolar disorder and attempted suicide at one point following her forced marriage. Though her union with Pierangeli was one she longed to escape, it did result in the birth of one cherished son, Walter, in 1895. After working professionally and engaging with women's activism in Milan, Aleramo gained the confidence to leave her husband in 1902.[48] Escaping this marriage, however positive, also had substantial emotional consequences. For the next several years, she unsuccessfully attempted to gain custody of Walter and agonized over her supposed "abandonment" of her son.[49]

Aleramo engaged in romantic relationships with numerous male Italian intellectuals and cultural icons after leaving her husband, and these entanglements would often appear within the pages of her fiction. She lived for several years with Giovanni Cena, the director of *Nuova antologia* who gave her the name "Sibilla." Once their relationship ended, Aleramo had relationships with notable Italian artists and intellectuals, among them Giovanni Papini, Umberto Boccioni, Giovanni Boine, and Dino Campana in the 1910s. During the *Ventennio*, she found herself in a love triangle with Giulio Parise and Julius Evola—intellectuals involved in the esoteric *Gruppo d'Ur*; her 1926 epistolary novel *I love therefore I am* (*Amo dunque sono*) chronicled this triangle. While numerous literary scholars conclude that 1932's *The Whip* (*Il frustino*) explored Aleramo's relationship with Boine, archival research revealed that some

[47] Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers*, 11.
[48] Anna Grimaldi Morosoff, *Transfigurations: The Autobiographical Novels of Sibilla Aleramo* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 9.
[49] Richard Drake, "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano: A Writer's Dilemma," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51, no. 2 (1990): 256.

dialogue in the novel between Mino Vergili (Boine's fictional stand-in) and Caris di Rosia (with whom the author identified) came directly from a letter Aleramo sent to Julius Evola in 1925.[50] As Evola was and remains an influential Fascist racial theorist, their romantic relationship calls into question Aleramo's connection to the regime's most repugnant ideologies. Yet, another lover of Aleramo's, Tito Zaniboni, attempted to assassinate Mussolini in November 1925. Literary scholar Fiora A. Bassanese deemed the author "essentially apolitical" as she had connections to "all shades of the ideological spectrum."[51] Unlike the five other authors in this dissertation, Aleramo was the only woman with a documented romantic relationship with another woman. Her romance with Cordula "Lina" Poletti served as the basis for 1919's *Il passaggio*, and numerous literary scholars focus on the queer content of Aleramo's corpus.[52] This dissertation focuses on Aleramo's relationship to and rejection of the nuclear family as promoted by the Fascist regime. It would be a mistake for scholars to read Aleramo's political commitments solely through those of her lovers, but it is important to be cognizant of her connections. Within this authoritarian context, where she staunchly lived her life independently in contrast with the regime's desire for the traditional family of husband, wife, and children, Aleramo's literature voiced frustration with and dissent towards Fascist gender politics, despite her sometimes-intimate relationship with supporters and the regime.

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[50] Sibilla Aleramo to Julius Evola, n.d. (Domenica 28 [1925?]), Box 88, File 988.3 Fondo Aleramo Lettere di Sibilla, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome. See also Simone Caltabellota, *Un amore degli anni venti: Storia erotica e magica di Sibilla Aleramo e Giulio Parise* (Milan: Ponte alle grazie, 2015).

[51] Fiora A. Bassanese, "Sibilla Aleramo: Writing a Personal Myth," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1995), 145.

[52] See May De Leo, "'Mi morse le labra, bevette il mio respiro.': Vampirism and Literary Lesbianism in Liberal Italy," in *Homosexuality in Italian Literature, Society, and Culture, 1789-1919*, ed. Lorenzo Benadusi, et al (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 65-82; Marzio Barbagli and Asher Colombo, *Omosessuali moderni: Gay e lesbiche in Italia* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2007); Alessandra Cenni, *Gli occhi eroici: Sibilla Aleramo, Eleonora Duse, Cordula Poletti: Una storia d'amore nell'Italia della Belle Époque* (Milan: Mursia, 2011); Charlotte Ross, *Eccentricity and Sameness: Discourses on Lesbianism and Desire between Women in Italy, 1860s-1930s* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015); and Lucia Re, "Eleonora Duse and Women: Performing Desire, Power, and Knowledge," *Italian Studies* 70, no. 3 (2015): 347-63, DOI 10.1179/0075163415Z.000000000106.

Unlike Aleramo, Grazia Deledda's romantic life would culminate in the formation of a traditional family. Yet, she still faced challenges as a young woman as a result of her professional writing career. After her Nobel Prize victory in 1926, *The Christian Science Monitor* published a profile of the winner for its U.S. readers. Deeming her a "Southern Joseph Conrad," the article concluded by documenting Deledda's home life. It explained that because many Nuoresi were unhappy with her (in their opinions) exaggerations of "local primitive conditions," "none of the islanders wanted to marry this little woman who described them in such a dubious light."[53] In her hometown, he young Deledda was a *persona non grata* and deemed an unappealing marriage prospect. While visiting the Cagliari home of Maria Manca, the editor of popular woman's magazine *La donna sarda* (*The Sardinian Woman*) in 1899, Deledda met Palmiro Madesani, a civil servant for the Italian Ministry of Finance. While playing a parlor game and earning a penalty, Deledda had to answer Madesani's question (turn-of-the-century "Truth or Dare," if you will): describe your ideal husband. The writer unhesitatingly declared, "Like you!"; the following day, she received his declaration of love. She responded that she would accept a proposal of marriage if the wedding took place within two months.[54] Seemingly desperate to flee Nuoro's criticism and strict social rules and also because she was older than the traditional age of marriage at 29, Deledda married Madesani in January 1900, just two months after they met. *The Christian Science Monitor* concluded, "They have been 'happily ever after,' as the fairy tales say."[55]

[53] Newspaper clipping "Italy Proud of Grazia Deledda, Winner of Coveted Nobel Prize," *The Christian Science Monitor*, RIT 474, Fondo Deledda, Istituto Etnografico della Sardegna (ISRE), Nuoro, Sardinia, Italy.
[54] Kozma, *Eternal Adolescents*, 35.
[55] "Italy Proud of Grazia Deledda."

Deledda's correspondence with her children over the years suggests that her marriage to Madesani was a happy one. Shortly after their nuptials, the couple moved to Rome where they would spend the rest of their lives. In December 1900, they welcomed their first son, Sardus (named after Deledda's brother), and their second son, Franz (the Sardinian diminutive of Francesco), was born in 1903.[56] During the first decade of their marriage, Deledda published thirteen novels, indicating her ability to balance her professional and familial responsibilities. Madesani clearly supported his wife's writing as he served as her literary agent.[57] Within the family, he earned the nickname "*il padrone*." Taking his duties seriously in order to protect Deledda's commercial interests, he even studied Spanish, German, and English to directly contact foreign editors.[58] Because Madesani seemingly focused on the advancement of his wife's career as opposed to his own, men in Roman literary circles were perplexed and even hostile towards the couple. In his 1911 novel *Her Husband* (*Suo marito*), Luigi Pirandello—the preeminent Italian author, playwright and 1934 Nobel Prize Winner in Literature—caricatured the Madesani-Deledda marriage. In his thinly veiled fiction, protagonist Silvia arrived in the capital city with her husband Giustino and stirred up curiosity in the Roman literary scene. She had received little formal schooling, but her art was "the spontaneous expression of a spirit abundantly endowed by nature with remarkable gifts […] she retains little or no interest in the success of her works. Her husband Giustino is the exact opposite."[59] Pirandello did not respect this "modern" marriage, in which the wife was a significant breadwinner in her own right. His

[56] Maria Elvira Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda: Una vita per il Nobel* (Sassari, Italy: Carlo Delfino Editore, 2016), 63; 71.
[57] E. Ann Matter, "Afterword," in Grazia Deledda, *The Church of Solitude*, trans. E. Ann Matter (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 156
[58] Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda*, 67.
[59] Carlo I. Golino, "Pirandello's Least Known Novel," *Italica* 26, no. 4 (1949): 263-4.

lampooning of Madesani suggested his disgust for a man serving his wife's career and supposedly neglecting his rightful duty as head of the household.

Unlike in Catholic Italy, both men and women in Kemalist Turkey were legally able to end marriages. Indeed, Halide Edip in her *Memoirs* remarked that by 1926 divorce seemed like "an almost ordinary incident in a woman's life."[60] In Islamic law, marriage is not a religious commitment like in Christianity; it is a contract between two people or, if underage, between their families and guardians. While a religious figure (such as an imam) might attend the proceedings, the marriage's validity does not depend on a religious blessing.[61] It should be noted that obtaining a divorce within Islamic practice is far easier for husbands than for wives. Nevertheless, it is possible for Muslim women to end marriages with the agreement of their husbands or in certain limited circumstances. The three studied Turkish authors all divorced.[62] One wonders how Sibilla Aleramo's life and career would have been transformed by this right.

In 1901, Halide Edip married Salih Zeki Bey, her mathematics professor from Robert College. As in the case of Deledda, her husband also supported her professional writing career.[63] Cultural scholar Pelin Başcı notes that Halide Edip's entrance onto the Ottoman literary scene in the early 1900s occurred during a period of enthusiasm for women's public involvement by male intelligentsia and after the Hamidian reforms increased women's access to education.[64] After receiving opposition to a piece she wrote on women's emancipation for the journal *Tanin* during the 1909 counter-coup, Edip fled Istanbul with her sons, first stopping in Alexandria, Egypt, and

[60] Halide Edip, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (New York: The Century Co., [1926]), 308.
[61] Duben and Bahar, *Istanbul Households*, 107.
[62] Ibid., 115.
[63] Şıma Begüm İmşır, "Hide and Seek: On Trail of Women Writers," *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 1, no. 2 (2011): 117. The couple additionally had two sons, Ayetullah and Zeki Hikmetullah.
[64] Pelin Başcı, "Love, Marriage, and Motherhood: Changing Expectations of Women in Late Ottoman Istanbul," *Turkish Studies* 4, no. 3 (2003): 149.

then traveling to London at the invitation of British educator Isabel Fry. She only returned to Istanbul when the counter-coup ended in 1910.[65] Upon her return home, her husband announced his desire for a second wife. As an opponent of polygamy from her youth, Halide wrote, "A believer in monogamy, in the inviolability of name and home, I felt it to be my duty to retire from what I had believed would be my home to the end of my life."[66]

After a separation of two months, Halide Edip found that Salih Zeki Bey had married again but still wanted her to remain his first wife. She vehemently refused and demanded a divorce, to which he eventually agreed. In her memoirs, she documented this dark period in her life, and through her writing practice, Halide Edip "came back to life by expressing her emotions."[67] Her novels from the 1910s— *Raik's Mother* (*Raik'in Annesi*, 1909), *Seviyye Talip* (1910), *Handan* (1912), and *Yeni Turan* (*New Turan*, 1912)—explored elements of the woman question in Ottoman society that related to her own experiences: marriage, love, motherhood, and divorce. Basçı compares Halide Edip's female protagonists in these novels to Henry James-esque characters, and while they struggle with society and their own consciousness, the author frequently used different women to explore the tensions between reform and conformity.[68] In comparison with her novels published in the years immediately following the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, literary critics emphasize the sociopolitical content of her novels from the late Ottoman Era. As a woman writer, Halide Edip too grappled with the "woman question" and provided her own interpretations.

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[65] Edip had previously made Fry's acquaintance in Istanbul. Fry (1869-1958) founded two experimental schools in the United Kingdom. Her family hailed from a Quaker background; father Sir Edward Fry was a jurist, sister (Sara) Margery Fry, a penal reformer, and her brother Roger Eliot Fry was an artist in the Bloomsbury Group. The UCL Institute of Education Library houses Fry's archive.
[66] Halide Edip, *Memoirs* (1926), 310.
[67] İmşır, "Hide and Seek," 117.
[68] Başcı, "Love, Marriage, and Motherhood," 146-7.

During the Balkan War of 1913-4, Halide Edip became acquainted with Dr. Adnan [Adıvar], a professor, a deputy in the Ottoman Parliament, and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Medical College. He was the son of a *kadi* and after graduating from the Darülfünun's medical faculty, he continued his studies in Germany.[69] After she approached the doctor with an illness, he diagnosed her with appendicitis—"There are dozens of cases that I know of in the city – quite an epidemic"—and visited Halide Edip after her surgery. Her memoirs recalled, "The expressions of sympathy and interest which I received during my illness touched me deeply."[70] In 1917, Halide Edip married Dr. Adnan.[71] Not only would their marriage be a significant political partnership, but it also appears to have been one founded on mutual respect and admiration. Within her novels from the Kemalist Era, Halide Edip demonstrated that she too was torn between conformity and reform; she vociferously agreed with many elements of the nationalist project but also possessed her own attitudes and views toward the inclusion of women within the new Turkish nation. Unlike Derviş and Muhiddin, Halide Edip was enmeshed in national politics of the Kemalist regime by virtue of her wartime experiences and her husband's position in the government. Dr. Adnan was the first minister of the Republic's Ministry of Health and Social Assistant (*Sıhhiye ve Muavenet-i İçtimaiye Vekaleti*), as well as, a founding member of Parliament.[72]

In Halide Edip's *Memoirs*, she perhaps had young women like fellow writer Suat Derviş in mind when discussing the common occurrence of divorce within Kemalist society: Derviş

[69] Ömer M. Alper, "Adıvar, Abdülhak Adnan," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, ed. Kate Fleet, et al (2008).
[70] Halide Edip, *Memoirs* (1926), 358.
[71] Hülya Adak, "An Epic for Peace: Introduction to the Reprint," in Halide Edib Adıvar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004), xi. Her memoirs chronicle that she was actually in Syria at the time of their marriage and her father served as the proxy for the marriage. See Halide Edip, *Memoirs* (1926), 450.
[72] Emine Önhan Evered and Kyle Thomas Evered, "An Atlas of Maladies, Microbes, and Morals: Tropes of Scientism in Early Turkey's Public Health Education," *Historical Geography* 44 (2016): 106.

married four times. Her first husband was Seyfi Cenap Berksoy, a wrestler who represented Turkey in the 1924 Paris Olympic Games.[73] The marriage was short-lived, however, as Derviş had high expectations for her partnerand wanted her independence.[74] Her second marriage occurred not long after the split with Berksoy. She married Selami İzzet Sedes, a fellow journalist and writer. Behmoaras described the Galatasaray graduate as "opinionated, clever, romantic, an enthusiast of French literature, theater, and soccer, and also a lover of poker and drinking."[75] Born to a well-connected family, Sedes published numerous novels and articles in major journals of the late Ottoman era, such as *Servet-i Fünun* and *Yeni Mecmua*. Like her first marriage, her relationship to Sedes ended quickly; Behmoaras speculates that Sedes inspired the character Midhat in 1928's *Like Gönül* (*Gönül gibi*)—which will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.[76] Derviş's third husband Nizamettin Nazif Tepedelenlioğlu was also a writer; reasons for their divorce are unknown.[77] In 1941, she married her fourth and final husband Reşat Fuat [Baraner] (1900/2-68), a relative of Mustafa Kemal's who joined the Türk Komünist Partisi (TKP) in 1925. In the late 1920s and 1930s, Reşat Fuat made numerous trips to Moscow, eventually becoming a leader in the TKP.[78] Derviş herself already had a connection to Turkish Communism through her lifelong friend Nazım Hikmet, whom scholars frequently call "her childhood love," but she became more active in organized Communist politics in the late 1930s and 1940s.[79]

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[73] Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 109
[74] The marriage seems to have taken place in 1920. Ibid., 60-6.
[75] Ibid., 67.
[76] Ibid., 84.
[77] Behmoaras does not give the start and end dates of this marriage. Nizamettin Nazif Tepedelenlioğlu (1901-70) studied at the Naval War College. In addition to working as a journalist, he also wrote the novel *Kara Davut* (1928) and published an extensive research project, *Köroğlu*. See Hüseyin Özdemir, "Nizamettin Nazif Tepedelenlioğlu's Life, Literary Personality and Analysis of Novels," (Unpublished MA Thesis: Kırıkkale, 2018).
[78] Ersin Tosun, *Reşat Fuat Baraner: Yaşamı, Çalışmaları, Anıları* (Istanbul: Sosyal Tarih Yayınları, 2013), 7-9.
[79] Demir, "Suat Derviş," 50. In 1944, Derviş and Baraner were detained because of their "illegal communist" activities and she was sentenced to eight months of imprisonment. Berktay, "Derviş, Suat (Saadet Baraner) (1905-1972)," 110-1. As this marriage and official affiliation with Communism occurred after the first decade of the Kemalist regime, it will not be analyzed in this dissertation.

Like Halide Edip, Nezihe Muhiddin married twice. Her first marriage to Muhlis Ethem was short-lived; Zihnioğlu notes that Muhiddin rarely discussed this relationship but conveyed the impression that it was not a happy one.[80] Her second husband Memduh [Tepedelengil] served as the commissioner for the Istanbul Municipal Companies. They had one son named Malik, but according to the writer Taha Toros, Muhiddin's marriage to Memduh Bey as neither happy nor compatible.[81] Since few archival sources exist to document Muhiddin's (dis)satisfaction with marital life, her novels then serve as important resources to explore her views on marriage, partnership, and motherhood.

Within this group of six women, Maria Messina was an outlier in that she never married. Within her correspondence to Verga, she wrote that she "did not suffer the pains [of her characters] but I suffered. My story is one of those too simple stories but it is as sad as stories that are not told."[82] The editor of this letter collection infers that one of her sufferings was an unhappy love, but her missives never gave definitive confirmation. Another potential and well-documented source of pain was her multiple sclerosis. In 1914, she reported that she and her mother were staying with her brother—now married with children and working as an attorney general for the Trani Court of Appeals—and they were "taking the waters."[83] Messina's condition was chronic and no doubt difficult to treat in the early twentieth century. Despite never marrying, Messina explored a range of romantic expression and exploration in her corpus. Considering her 1923 *A Flower that did not bloom* (*Un fiore che non fiori*) and 1928 *Love denied* (*L'amore negato*), Messina keenly observed and commented on unhappy romances and strained

[80] Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkilap,* 39.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Maria Messina to Giovanni Verga, 29 March 1911, in Messina, *Idillo letterario*, 34.
[83] Trani is a town on Italy's southeastern coast, north of Bari. Taking the waters means to go to a spa and seek healing in thermal waters. Messina to Verga, 13 July 1914, in Ibid., 51.

familial dynamics, both nuclear and extended, to demonstrate that the regime's promoted vision of happy wife and mother obscured the complexities of Italian women's experiences.

These writers' romantic and matrimonial histories (or lack thereof in the case of Messina) exemplified complicated lives that would influence their fictional explorations of the relationship between love and politics. Though Turkish women were able to legally end marriages that did not support their needs and desires, they still struggled in the romantic lives. Sibilla Aleramo had to leave her son in order to escape her oppressive marriage. In their novels published during the 1920s and early 1930s, these authors discussed love as both emancipatory and dangerous; explored how romance was transformed by toxic masculinity as perpetuated by the regimes; and transformed heartbreak into a mode of feminist resilience and dissent. The next chapter links their writing careers to organized women's political and social activism. It also explores their relationships to the Fascist and Kemalist regimes in order to understand how their novels served as hidden transcripts of dissent in a period marked by censorship, the continued denial of women's rights, and the suppression of opposition.

Chapter 2: Writing amidst the Regimes

Prior to the establishment of either regime, both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal voiced support for women's advancement within society. Yet after taking power in October 1922, the Fascists in Italy stalled a parliamentary vote on women's suffrage despite increasing national support for it.[1] The following year at the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) Congress held in Rome, Mussolini delivered a speech to participants, giving assurances of his support for women gaining the municipal franchise. He said:

> I do not believe that enfranchising women will have catastrophic consequences, as some misogynists argue, but in all probability it will have beneficial results because women will bring to the exercise of these new rights these fundamental virtues of balance, equilibrium, and prudence.[2]

Three years later, the Fascist government passed Law no. 2125 in November 1925, giving the administrative vote to taxpaying women older than twenty-five, "who were mothers or widows of soldiers who had died in the Great War, well-deserving female citizens, or holders of decorations."[3] The extension of the vote was made moot, however, when elections were completely abolished the following year. Similarly, Mustafa Kemal made early promises to grant women social and political equality in the new Turkish Republic. In February 1923, months prior to the nation's official establishment, he declared, "Turkish women have fought bravely for national independence. Today they should be free, enjoy education and occupy a position equal

[1] Robin Pickering-Iazzi, *Unspeakable Women: Selected Short Stories Written by Italian Women during Fascism* (New York: The Feminist Press of The City University of New York, 1993), 4.
[2] Benito Mussolini, quoted in Victoria DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 36. See Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia v. 19*, eds. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1951-78), 215.
[3] Susann Mancini, "From the Struggle for Suffrage to the Construction of a Fragile Gender Citizenship: Italy 1861-2009," in *The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe: Voting to Become Citizens*, eds. Blanca Rodríguez-Ruiz and Ruth Rubio-Marín (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 380.

to that of men; they are entitled to it."[4] However, the Kemalist regime backtracked on the legal codification of women's equality almost immediately and made it difficult for women to express dissent towards its policies. It would take until 1930 for Turkish women to gain the municipal vote and then the national vote in 1935. Historian Şirin Tekeli argued that this legislation served as a means for Mustafa Kemal to distance himself from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.[5] By extending the franchise, Mustafa Kemal and the Kemalists claimed that they were "progressive" and not autocratic like Mussolini and Hitler. Within studies of fascism and authoritarianism, Turkey's being "non-Western" influences scholars' readings of the Kemalist regime. Stanley Payne wrote that Turkey was "a prototype of the modernizing and westernizing developmental dictatorship," but "non-fascist," because its six guiding principles (*altı ok*) were not done "in a fascist sense."[6] The goal of this dissertation is not to interrogate "was Kemalist Turkey fascist?" Rather, evidence presented here argues that the sociopolitical subordination of Turkish women persisted in spite of Mustafa Kemal's "progressive," consciously "non-fascist" politics.

In this transitional moment from Liberal Italy and the Ottoman Empire to interwar authoritarian regimes, these six women writers wrote throughout a period of tremendous political and social change. In order to understand the critical feminist content of their novels, it is important to chart the authors' relationships to women's activism both prior to and after the rise

[4] Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] quoted in Nermin Abadan-Unat, "The Modernization of Turkish Women," *Middle East Journal* 32, no. 3 (1978): 293.
[5] Şirin Tekeli quoted in Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 321.
[6] Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996),144. The *Altı Ok* (Six Arrows), the major values/principles of Kemalism, were adopted in 1931 as part of the official *Cumhuriyet Halk Partısı* (CHP, Republican People's Party) program. They are Republicanism, Populism, Nationalism, Laicism, Statism, and Reformism. See Berk Esen, "Nation-Building, Party-Strength, and Regime Consolidation: Kemalism in Comparative Perspective," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 4 (2014): 600-20, DOI: 10.1080/14683849.2014.986318 and Sinan Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: The Republican People's Party, Secularism and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009).

of the regimes. With the exception of Muhiddin, these writers did not participate in institutional feminist activism during the 1920s. However, their novels reflected their clear awareness of political and feminist discussions and echoed their own experiences with institutional politics and activism. As a result, their works expressed dissent and resistance to authoritarian gender politics in a period marked by the often-violent suppression of opposition.

Historical Women's Movements and Press in Pre-Fascist Italy

Late nineteenth-century national reform efforts in Italy and the Ottoman Empire were accompanied by the rise of women's movements. Where the "women question" was asked and answered predominantly by male ideologues, female citizen-subjects began to engage more actively in the public sphere. Following Unification in 1861, Italian women who previously engaged in revolutionary activities used their established networks to support the elevation of women in society. Their efforts first focused on improving women's access to education with the expressed goal of becoming better mothers.[7] In the early twentieth century, Italian women's groups featured three dominant ideological strands: socialist, Catholic, and lay-bourgeois (or secular, non-Church affiliated).[8] Even amongst Catholic and lay-bourgeois groups, there were significant ideological differences, ranging from arch-conservative toward more progressive views. Within Italian historiography, scholars frequently refer to early twentieth-century activism as "emancipationism" or the "women's movement," whereas Italian women's political action of

[7] Helena Dawes, *Catholic Women's Movements in Liberal and Fascist Italy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 24.
[8] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 21.

the 1970s and afterwards is "feminism."[9] However, because the groups with which Aleramo and Deledda were affiliated themselves used the terminology of "feminism" and "feminist," this dissertation will.[10] Additionally, these six studied authors all expressed varying levels of commitments and concerns. For example, while Halide Edip was not a proponent of suffrage whereas Nezihe Muhiddin lost her position as the president of the Turkish Women's Union because of her radical instance on the franchise, they both were and can be feminists.

Many women's groups in Italy did not initially begin with suffrage as their end-goal. Often, they focused on philanthropic efforts before shifting their attention towards national, institutional politics. A major bourgeois women's group was National Council of Italian Women (CNDI, *Consiglio nazionale delle donne italiane*). Founded in 1899, the organization's first activities centered on establishing a lending library and reading room for primary school teachers. Later, they launched campaigns focusing on paternity tests, the abolition of marital authorization, female and child labor protections, and the vote.[11] The CNDI's "most vibrant" affiliate was Tuscan Woman's Federation (FFT, *La Federazione femminile toscana*). Their archival materials found at the Central State Archives in Rome highlight the vast range of activities and causes Italian lay-bourgeois groups supported and engaged with both before and after the *Ventennio*.[12] Established in 1907, the FFT became affiliated with the CNDI the same year. Their inaugural efforts included the establishment of circulating libraries and the

[9] Perry Willson, "Confusione terminologica: "femminismo" ed "emancipazionismo" nell'Italia liberale," *Italia contemporanea* no. 290 (2019): 211.
[10] The Milan-based *Unione femminile nazionale* (UFN) defined their activism and politics as "practical feminism." Its peer organization, *Consiglio nazionale delle donne italiane* (CNDI), would toggle between "emancipationist" and "feminist." Willson, "Confusione terminologica," 212.
[11] Dawes, *Catholic Women's Movements in Liberal and Fascist Italy*, 58.
[12] At the *Archivio centrale dello stato* in Rome, *La Federazione femminile Toscana* (FFT, Tuscan Woman's Federation) is prominently featured in their collection of CNDI archival materials. Dawes refers to the Florence branch as the organization's "most vibrant." Ibid.

organization of a conference on women's hygiene. The following year, they raised money for survivors of the Messina (Sicily) earthquake and discussed issues of particular concern to women: the juridical status of women; the abolition of marital authorization; paternity research; and issues of juvenile delinquency.[13] Their activism also enabled members to engage with global issues. During the 1911-12 Italo-Ottoman war over Libya, the FFT raised money for families of fallen soldiers and some members even traveled to Tripoli to work as Red Cross nurses.[14] In addition to continued philanthropic efforts during the First World War, the organization provided social resources and helped facilitate women's entrance into the public sphere to an unprecedented degree in Italian history. The FFT organized an information and correspondence service for soldiers and their families, provided nursing training for women, helped women find work in offices and in munitions factories, and joined *Pro Suffragio*[15] in their demands for the enfranchisement of women.[16] Their activism presented a wide portfolio of causes and concerns, all of which emphasized women's increased sociopolitical public engagement.

By 1919, the national CNDI established a "Civil and Political Life" section in which it publicly advocated for more formal political rights. This branch of the organization sought to prepare women "for the new duties that new rights have granted her or are about to allow her to assert herself as a factor of moral conscience in the nation's civil life."[17] With the hope that

[13] Consiglio nazionale delle donne italiane – Sezione di Firenze, *Relazione sull'attività della sezione 1907-1932* (Florence: Tipografia fascista, n.d.), 4-5. Found in Consiglio nazionale donne italiane (1907-2006) Box 3, Archivi di partiti, sindacati, movimenti, associazioni e comitati, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome.
[14] Ibid., 5.
[15] Pro Suffragio hosted the 1923 IWSA Congress in Rome. See Daniela Rossini, *Donne e propaganda internazionale: Percorsi femminili tra Italia e Stati Uniti nell'età della Grande Guerra* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2015).
[16] Consiglio nazionale delle donne italiane – Sezione di Firenze, *Relazione sull'attività della sezione 1907-1932*, 6.
[17] Raffaella Riva Sanseverino, *Il Consiglio Nazionale delle donne italiane – La Sezione centrale "Vita civile e politica"* (Rome: Tipografica dell'unione editrice, 1919), 2. Found in Consiglio nazionale donne italiane (1907-

Italian men would recognize the value and importance of women's contributions during the war, the CNDI believe it was the right time to advocate for more formal rights. By 1921, they further articulated their demands. The CNDI called for:

- recognition of the political and administrative vote for women
- reform of the civil code for a more effective defense of motherhood and minors
- protection of the working woman and her legitimate rights
- elevation of the school and national culture
- state administration for the restauration of the nation's economy[18]

Following the establishment of the Fascist regime in October 1922, the CNDI lobbied the new government to follow up on its promises for women's political rights. In November 1922, the organization joined a coalition of women's groups to write Mussolini and ask him to commit to women's suffrage not only as "an act of justice but in the interests of and for the same prestige of our Country."[19] However, the regime would ignore these calls and ultimately ignored efforts by groups like the CNDI to extend the franchise. It held its final annual congress in 1926, and after the death of long-term leader Countess Gabriella Spalletti Rasponi in 1931, the Fascists foisted a regime-selected president onto the CNDI.[20] By the 1930s, state entities like the Women's Fasci

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2006) Box 3, Folder 3, Subfolder 2, Archivi di partiti, sindacati, movimenti, associazioni e comitati, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome.

[18] -riconoscimento del voto politico e amministrativo alla donna
-riforma del codice civile per una più efficace difesa della maternità e dei minorenni
-tutela della donna lavoratrice e dei suoi legittimi diritti
-elevazione della scuola e della coltura nazionale
-rigida amministrazione statale per la restaurazione della economia della nazione
"Apello del Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane." Consiglio nazionale donne italiane (1907-2006) Box 5, Folder 13, Subfolder 5 (first part) "Lettere da Roma e documenti vari – 1922," Archivi di partiti, sindacati, movimenti, associazioni e comitati, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome.

[19] The signatory groups included *l'Associazione nazionale per la donna*, *l'Associazione nazionale madri e donne dei combattenti*, *Federazione Nazionale Pro Suffragio Femminile* ("Pro Suffragio"), *Associazione* [Federazione] *Nazionale Italiana Laureate e Diplomate istituti superiori* (FILDIS), *Unione cristiana delle giovani*, and *Associazione nazionale "Sorres Lucis*."

[20] The Florence branch remained open until 1933. Dawes, *Catholic Women's Movements in Liberal and Fascist Italy*, 58.

(*Fasci femminili*) or the National Association of Women Professionals, Artists, and Graduates (*Associazione nazionale professioniste, artiste, laureate*) absorbed numerous independent entities.[21] In order to avoid opposition, the regime staunchly spread its control over these groups, a further subordination of the private individual to the Fascist collective.

Within this atmosphere of women's organizing for greater rights, the Italian authors Aleramo, Deledda, and Messina established connections of various degrees to these groups. In 1899, Aleramo accepted the directorship of the Milan-based journal *Female Italy* (*L'Italia femminile*), and because her husband was unemployed at the time, the family relocated to the Italian publishing capital.[22] That same year, in addition to her professional work, Aleramo joined the National Female Union (UFN, *Unione femminile nazionale*), which had the explicit goals of "elevating and instructing women and defending infants and motherhood."[23] The UFN's leadership first comprised self-identified socialist women—Ersilia Majno Bronzini, Ada Negri, and Jole Bersellini Bellini—and the Milan-based organization soon had branches in several major Italian cities, predominantly in the north-central half of the country: Turin, Florence, Rome, Bergamo, Venice, and Udine.[24] The UFN called their efforts "practical feminism"; while they undertook some philanthropic efforts, they prioritized institutional political action over charity. In 1906, the UFN circulated a pro-suffrage petition, demanding the recognition of women's right to the administrative and political vote. It received nearly 10,000 signatures.[25] Aleramo actively engaged with the group and became friends with president Ersilia Majno and

[21] Dawes, *Catholic Women's Movements in Liberal and Fascist Italy*, 58.
[22] Fiora A. Bassanese, "Sibilla Aleramo (Rina Faccio) (1876-1860)," in *Italian Women Writers*, ed. Rinaldina Russell (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 9.
[23] Unione femminile nazionale, *Constituzione* (Milan 1899).
[24] Dawes, *Catholic Women's Movements in Liberal and Fascist Italy*, 59.
[25] Ibid.

the author Negri.[26] These relationships provided Aleramo with a supportive community that was similarly committed to and interested in the advancement of women within Italian society. If women could gain the franchise, what other rights were attainable? Engagement with the UFN gave Aleramo refuge from her marriage and provided her with additional professional writing opportunities.[27]

Coinciding with the rise of women's organizations, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a proliferation of women's periodicals in Italy. The bimonthly *Women's Journal* (*GDD*, *Il Giornale delle donne*), established in 1872, had a mixed editorial message. Published out of Turin and directed by Americo Vespucci, it "aimed to promote women's culture, defend her rights, and […] avoid political and religious matters."[28] Despite this last goal, articles frequently examined women's access to education and employment, concerns about suffrage, and arguments on divorce. Published into the *Ventennio*, *GDD* continued to extensively document political concerns of gender and everyday life. In the 6 November 1924 *Digressions* (*Divagazioni*) section, editor Vespucci wrote at length on the Ministry of Public Education's revisions of textbooks.[29] This article informed mothers about potential changes to their children's education, and it connected women readers to broader political concerns within Fascist society. Within the same issue, Riccardo Leoni reported on an interview conducted by Maria A. Loschi

[26] Faccio wrote, "Ada Negri come sta? Lavora, adesso?" ("How is Ada Negri? Is she working now?"). Rina Pierangeli Faccio (Sibilla Aleramo) to Ersilia Maino, 14 July 1902, Box 17, Folder 6, Fondo Ersilia Majno, Archivio storico dell'Unione femminile nazionale, Milan.
[27] Rina Pierangeli Faccio [Sibilla Aleramo], "In biblioteca," *Unione femminile* (n.d./1904?)," RIT 802, Fondo deledda, ISRE, Nuoro, Sardinia, Italy.
[28] Katharine Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism, 1870-1910* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 38.
[29] G. Vespucci, "Divagazioni," *Il Giornale delle donne* (6 Novembre 1924), 322.

with Dr. Alexandra Kollontai of the Soviet Union in the *Observations and Meditations* section.[30] For a publication seeking to avoid discussions of politics, the *GDD* specifically articulated that everyday concerns for women—their role as homemakers, the education of their children, etc.—were fundamentally political.

While men produced the *GDD*, several key periodicals run by women emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1906, Carmella Baricelli published *Alliance* (*L'Alleanza*), which served as a point of reference for women belonging to different ideological strands of the women's movement. Historian Perry Willson notes that because of its broad editorial mission, *Alliance* frequently featured articles with contrasting political viewpoints.[31] That this publication willingly gave space to socialist viewpoints revealed a commitment to comprehensive news on myriad political perspectives. Emerging a year later, Sofia Bisi Albini's monthly magazine *Female Italian Life* (*VFI*, *Vita femminile italiana*) was deemed more moderate, and in 1908, the Hellenic-Latin Society of Rome's (*Società elleno-latina di Roma*) annual report declared, "No educated female reader (*lettrice*) can deny herself the pleasure of reading this periodical that faithfully reflects all of today's women's movements in the most correct and sympathetic forms of modern evolution."[32] *VFI* also functioned as a mouthpiece for

[30] Countess Maria A. Loschi was a writer, journalist, educator, and member of the Italian women's movement. In 1919 she toured public schools in the United States and in the 1920s was a professor at the University of Bologna. See Joseph Gustaitis, *Chicago Transformed: World War I and the Windy City* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016), 132; and Daniela Rossini, *Donne e propaganda internazionale: Percorsi femminili tra Italia e Stati Uniti nell'età della Grande Guerra* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2015).
Alexandra Kollontai (1872-1952) was first a Menshevik, then Bolshevik, and finally a Communist. From 1922-45, she served as diplomat for the Soviet Union. For discussion of Kollontai and Russian/Soviet gender politics, see Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
[31] Willson, "Confusione terminologica," 212-4.
[32] Angelo De Gubernatis, ed., *Annuario letterario e artistico del mondo latino (Organo della società elleno-latina di Roma)* (Rome, 1908), 319. The *Società elleno-latina* was founded in April 1902 in Rome with the goal of uniting "all people of Latin civilization that Greece [*Ellenia*] inspired." See Società elleno-latina, *Cronache della civilità elleno-latino: organo della Società elleno-latina* n.24 (Rome: Società elleno-latina, 1904), n.p.

the CNDI to share organizational news. Because Aleramo, Deledda, and Messina lived, read, and wrote during and after this period with a robust women's press and the emergence of women's groups, their novels written during the *Ventennio* echoed many concerns circulating in Italian feminist circles. They knew that these conversations were happening and their novels served as extended discussions on women's issues.

Women's Movements and the Press from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Republic

Ottoman women (primarily urban and elite) from the Hamidian through the Second Constitutional Eras established numerous women's educational, political, feminist, and philanthropic organizations. Like in Italy and other European contexts, these groups shared wide-ranging sociopolitical positions, "ranging from maternalist, separate-spheres feminisms to more individualistic and libertarian positions."[33] Many organizations began with philanthropic endeavors and often linked their efforts to their religious communities, whether through women's mosques, churches, and synagogues. In 1876, Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha's wife—history has not preserved her name—formed a group to collect money and supplies for war victims.[34] Simultaneously, other "international" (presumably foreign residents), Bulgarian, and Armenian women in Istanbul formed similar committees.

After the 1908 Revolution, Ottoman women established more political and education-oriented organizations, in addition to more traditional philanthropic efforts. From 1909 through

[33] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Some Awkward Questions on Women and Modernity in Turkey," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 275.
[34] Nicole A.N.M. Van Os, "Ottoman Women's Organizations: sources of the past, sources for the future," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 11, no. 3 (2000): 370.

the First World War, numerous groups fostered the inclusion of Ottoman women's voices into public sociopolitical participation. At the behest of the ruling Committee for Union and Progress, women in Salonica (now Thessaloniki, Greece) formed Ottoman Ladies' Organization for the Advancement of the Homeland (*Teâli-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti*) in 1909. Emerging around the time of the Balkan Wars, Istanbul women established Organization for the Protection of Ottoman and Turkish Women (*Osmanlı ve Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği*); Muhiddin was among its members. As a result of war mobilization from the 1911 Italo-Ottoman War through the First World War, Ottoman society demanded women's public participation to a historically unprecedented degree. This spectrum of civic engagement brought Ottoman women into contact with various issues and modes of public participation.

Due to a lack of archival sources, the majority of information on these women's organizations comes from their own publications. The surviving journals show that many of these groups participated in the expanding Ottoman print culture, helping disseminate new ideas and providing professional opportunities for women writers. The diverse editorial missions presented numerous perspectives for Ottoman women's engagement with society. The longest-running journal in the Ottoman women's press was *Ladies' Own Gazette* (*HMG*, *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*). Founded in 1897 by journalist İbnul Hakkı Tahir and his wife Fatma Şadiye Hanım and linked to Ottoman Ladies' Organization for the Advancement of the Homeland, it ran for over thirteen years with more than six hundred issues. *HMG* was a *Ladies' Home Journal* for the late Ottoman Empire, seeking to turn women into "good mothers, good wives, and good

Muslims."[35] The majority of the its managing editors and writers were daughters and wives of Ottoman bureaucrats and officials.[36] Nezihe Muhiddin's older cousin Nakiye Hanım contributed numerous stories to *HMG*. Writing under the pen name "Zekiye," she shared opinions on women's life that intersected with political concerns: the protection of women and children, criticism of wasteful fashion, and support for the usage of domestic goods to strengthen the national economy.[37] Like *GDD*, *HMG* did not have an explicit political platform, but it still enabled women writers and readers to develop a sociopolitical consciousness.

The first explicitly feminist and pro-suffrage journal of the Ottoman Empire was *Women's World* (*KD*, *Kadınlar Dünyası*), the official mouthpiece of Association for the Defense of Ottoman Women's Rights, founded in 1913. *KD* was created by and for women; unlike other publications in the women's press, men could not write for it. Founder and editor-in-chief Nuriye Ulviye [Mevlan] called upon diverse range of writers—Muslim Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, and even European interlocutors—to actively engage in discussions of national modernization and gender roles in Ottoman society.[38] Here, the subjects in question interrogated and explored the "woman question." *KD* championed women's empowerment *and* equality. Not only did it promote women's right to work, but some of the journal's writers also demanded that women

[35] Derya İner, "Gaining a Public Voice: Ottoman women's struggle to survive in the print life of early twentieth-century Ottoman society, and the example of Halide Edib (1884-1964)," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 6 (2015): 972.
[36] Elizabeth Brown Frierson, "Unimagined Communities: State, Press, and Gender in the Hamidian Era 1876-1909," (PhD dissertation: Princeton University, 1996), 74-5.
[37] Nakiye Hanım should not be confused with Nakiye [Elgün], a Turkish politician and leader. Nakiye Hanım was the daughter of Muhiddin's maternal uncle. Yaprak Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkilap: Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003), 36-7.
[38] Elife Biçer-Deveci, "The Movement of Feminist Ideas: The Case of *Kadınlar Dünyası*," in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880-1940*, ed. Liat Kozma, et al (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 348.

receive "equal pay for equal work."[39] Another element of *KD* was that it also published a French supplement that consistently featured articles working to counter European prejudices and myths about Muslim women being oppressed by the "yoke" of the veil and harem.[40] Gender scholar Deniz Kandiyoti argues that *KD* used allusions to Europe as a means to demonstrate that Ottoman modernization and reentering the global geopolitical stage as a major power could only happen through women's political elevation.[41]

By exploring women's organizations and press culture in the late Ottoman era, historians get a sense of the public milieu that surrounded Derviş, Halide Edip, and Muhiddin. Whether philanthropic efforts supporting the government during times of war or women's journal articles focusing on questions of political rights, these three women authors observed, read, or even participated in new modes of public political expression prior to the rise of the Kemalist regime. These models and experiences pointed to the potential for their novels to engage in existing forms of politics or undertake new modes of dissent. For both the Italian and Turkish authors, the opening of public intellectual sphere to women influenced the ways in which they negotiated national politics and individual concerns of personal autonomy and self-expression under the interwar authoritarian regimes.

Writing Under the Regimes

Under the Fascist and Kemalist regimes, novels by Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin gained new significance as documents of personal lived

[39] Kandiyoti, "Some Awkward Questions," 275.
[40] Biçer-Deveci, "The Movement of Feminist Ideas," 349.
[41] Kandiyoti, "Some Awkward Questions," 275.

experiences for Italian and Turkish women. As women writers they also had to navigate their careers in the midst of newly intensified gender expectations. In the *Ventennio*, Italian literary critics frequently grouped women authors into binaries in terms of skills, merits, or politics. In 1930, Stanis Ruinas drew distinctions based upon literary merit, separating the "writers" from the "scribblers" in his *Women Writers and Scribblers of Today* (*Scrittrici e scribbachine d'oggi*). Unlike writers Aleramo and Deledda whom he considered to produce works of quality and literary merit, Ruinas considered Messina a writer of poorer quality.[42] However, views on the authors' literary achievements and contributions constantly evolve. Literary scholar Jan Kozma has argued that many readers and critics of the Italian canon to this day regard Deledda as a "hack writer of romance novels."[43] This historical and present-day view also rings true for the Turkish novels studied in this dissertation. Particularly in the case of Derviş and Muhiddin's fiction from the 1920s, scholars frequently denigrate the literary quality or prestige of their work as lesser. In literary scholar Cevdret Kudret's anthology on twentieth-century Turkish writers includes Halide Edip as a "major novelist and story writer" and Derviş belonging to the category of "other writers. Muhiddin does not appear at all.[44] Additionally for Derviş, some scholars do not discuss *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*, 1923) and *Fatma's Sin* (*Fatma'nın Günahı*, 1924). Instead they place emphasize on her writings after she outwardly expressed socialist and Communist views in the mid-1930s.[45] In thinking about literary merit, Hugo- and Nebula-Award winning author and professor Joanna Russ writes that many feminists "argue that the automatic

[42] Stanis Ruinas, *Scrittrici e scribacchine d'oggi* (Rome: Casa editrice Accademia, 1930).
[43] Janice M. Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's Eternal Adolescents: The Pathology of Arrested Maturation* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 8.
[44] Cevdet Kudret, *Türk Hikaye ve Roman Antolojisi* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Yayınevi, 1945), 117.
[45] Şenol Aktürk writes that *Like Gönül* (*Gönül gibi*, 1928) fails to show a socialist or socially realistic perspective on society as it focuses on the upper class. See Şenol Aktürk, "Toplumcu Gerçekçi Yönüyle Suat Derviş'in Romanlarına Bakış," *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies* 5, no. 3 (2012): 25.

devaluation of women's experience and consequent attitudes, values, and judgments springs from an automatic devaluation of women per se, the belief that manhood is "normative" and womanhood somehow "deviant" or "special.""[46] In prioritizing the novels' emotional content and its relationship to personal and institutional politics—rather than "literary" merit, sophistication of plot, or aesthetic quality—I hope to illustrate how these six authors provided both subtle and overt critiques of women's lived experiences under authoritarian regimes in the Mediterranean.

More recently, literary scholars have argued that Italian women writers can be divided into two camps—those who supported women's emancipation and those who opposed it.[47] This binary does not allow nuance, complexity, or contradictions within their own views. Reading their novels, however, helps historians recover a more realistic tableau of any writer's perspectives, and in this dissertation, the studied authors' attitudes towards family and state politics. Yet, even scholars working on Aleramo, Deledda, and Messina individually fail to reach consensus about their views regarding Fascism and feminism. The same was true of their Turkish counterparts in their historical geopolitical context. As Russ notes, a strategy to suppress and diminish the content of women's writing is to have a double standard: "*but look what she wrote about.*"[48] These six authors' novels may not have featured women characters attending suffrage congresses or protesting through institutional political means, but their work openly presented responses to authoritarian gender politics within scenes of familial struggle, failed

[46] Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 49.
[47] Lara Gochin Raffaelli, "Una storia approfondita: Le lettere di Maria Messina ad Alessio Di Giovanni ed Enrico Bemporad (1910-1940). *Italica* 86, no. 3 (2009): 350. Interestingly among her list of major writers, Gochin does not mention where Grazia Deledda fit in on the socio-political spectrum, but Sibilla Aleramo was staunchly on the side of emancipation. For Gochin, Messina represented a writer in the midst of these conflicts or was perhaps undecided.
[48] Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, 72. Italics in the original.

romance, social ostracization, and complicated views on motherhood. Reading their novels thematically, it is evident that the six authors were aware of contemporary political discussions and they echoed similar concerns towards women's status and autonomy throughout the first decade of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. Reading these novels through the archive, thematically, and in dialogue, historians can document historical responses and resistance to authoritarian gender politics in these interwar Mediterranean contexts.

After the publication of her masterwork *A Woman* (*Una donna*) in 1906, Sibilla Aleramo worked predominantly as a journalist and had a thirteen-year novel hiatus until 1919's *The Passage* (*Il passaggio*). In the years before the *Ventennio*, Aleramo wrote articles and assisted her lover Giovanni Cena with his prestigious journal *New anthology* (*Nuova antologia*). Although numerous scholars highlight that she distanced herself from the woman's movement (namely UFN), she did not abandon her engagement with social activism. After making the acquaintance of activist Anna Celli, Aleramo worked as a teacher in the *Agro romano* school movement, recruiting volunteers and serving on its executive committee.[49] Literary scholar Sharon Wood writes that Aleramo's frustration with and subsequent distance from "emancipationist feminism" even before the rise of the Fascists was largely due to the fact that it "could not conceive of the formation of new identities outside traditional gender structures."[50]

As a woman forced to marry her rapist and essentially abandon her child because divorce was not an option, Aleramo recognized the limitations of institutional activism. Historian

[49] The *Agro romano* was the countryside surrounding Rome. Living conditions were terrible with thousands of workers and family members coming down with malaria and hundred dying each year. Celli was the president of the UFN's Roman branch and was married to Dr. Angelo Celli, an epidemiologist who worked to eradicate malaria in Italy. See Richard Drake, "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano: A Writer's Dilemma," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51, no. 2 (1990): 255-72.
[50] Sharon Wood, *Italian Women's Writing, 1860-1994* (London: The Athlone Press, 1995), 88.

Richard Drake writes that with her second book, *The Passage*, "feminism was not the path that [Aleramo] would follow."[51] This reading of Aleramo's works post-*A Woman* demonstrates a narrow conceptualization of feminism and politics that has frustratingly accompanied literary criticism of Aleramo's corpus for nearly four decades. Scholars point to her 1921 novel *Moving and being* (*Andando e stando*) in which she wrote, "Feminism, as a social movement, was a brief adventure, heroic at the beginning, grotesque at the end, an adventure of adolescence, inevitably and henceforth, outdated."[52] As a result, many scholars, holding up *A Woman* as her masterpiece, find her later works less concerned with "feminism" and therefore less satisfying in terms of political expression. Historian Victoria DeGrazia argues, "Unfortunately [Aleramo's] quavery epistolary novel *Amo dunque sono* (1927) and self-pitying *Il frustino* (1932) once more deluded the expectations to which twenty years earlier her feminist heart-cry *Una donna* had given rise."[53]

Critique of Aleramo's novels from the *Ventennio* demonstrates a suppression and devaluing of her feminist politics by historians and literary critics. By first upholding *Una donna* as Aleramo's "myth of isolated achievement," literary scholars and historians "reinforce the stereotypical notion of what women can write or should write."[54] Their analysis masks the critical content of her novels produced under the Fascist regime. In her 1938 collection of writings, *Little Dipper* (*Orsa minore*), Aleramo emphasized her continued support for female autonomy and articulated that "the woman artist must rediscover and represent her own reality";

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[51] Drake, "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano," 256.
[52] My translation of Aleramo translated in Alison Carton-Vincent, "Sibilla Aleramo, une héroïne du féminisme italien*?*," *CLIO. Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 30 (2009): 178.
[53] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 253.
[54] Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, 74. In the event the reader might point out that male writer only has one work represented in the canon, Russ argues "The damage done [to] women is greater because women constitute so few of the total in anthologies, classes, curricula, and readings lists at any level of education." Ibid. 78.

literary scholar Ann Caesar noted in 1980 that this concept "of course ran counter to fascist ideology."[55] In other words, Aleramo, *in 1938*, told her readers that her writing engaged with the notion that the "personal is political." Secondly, the dismissal of her engagement with politics based upon her lack of formal affiliation with women's institutions further obscures her critique of the Fascist regime. On the contrary, this dissertation presents 1932's *The Whip* (*Il frustino*) as a critical moment and articulation of Aleramo's feminism, and her deep-rooted resistance to authoritarian patriarchal politics.

The rise of Mussolini and Fascism coincided with many of Aleramo's personal and professional struggles. Just as scholars have failed to reach consensus on the sufficiency of Aleramo's feminism, they are equally unconvinced of her anti-Fascist credentials. Wood posits that the "real disaster of Aleramo's life was the arrival of a political culture which reinforced precisely the conceptions of women's roles and lives against which she rebelled."[56] Aleramo's choices to live independently and engage in non-marital romantic relationships throughout the *Ventennio* threatened and contradicted the regime's demands for Italian women to be wives and prolific mothers. In 1925, she signed philosopher Benedetto Croce's Anti-Fascist manifesto. The same year, her lover Tito Zaniboni attempted to assassinate Mussolini. Because of his attempt and her relationship to him, Aleramo was arrested and briefly imprisoned.[57] While the regime judged her by virtue of her relationship to Zaniboni, the more significant expression of dissent was her signing of Croce's manifesto. By 1930, Stanis Ruinas emphasized that while Aleramo's sincerity was "the best quality of her art," her works were "repugnant to the taste and good sense

[55] Ann Caesar, "Italian Feminism and the Novel: Sibilla Aleramo's 'A Woman'," *Feminist Review* 5 (1980): 82.
[56] Wood, *Italian Women's Writing, 1860-1994*, 88.
[57] Ibid., 89.

of the virtuous Italian people, who love the home and adore the Family."[58] Thematically, her literature failed to conform to the gender values the Fascist regime sought to inculcate in its populace.

Aleramo frequently existing on the edge of poverty; indeed much of her correspondence to her editor Mondadori focused on requests for early advances and higher percentages of the profits for her work). After receiving her Nobel Prize monetary winnings, Grazia Deledda even attempted to help Aleramo financially. While still in Stockholm, Deledda wrote to their mutual friend, the literary critic Arnaldo Frateili and asked that he anonymously give Aleramo her compensation from a short story publication. She said, "It is my desire that our mutual friend spend a Christmas like we spend it with our families."[59] Frateili did as Deledda asked, responding that Aleramo was sent 50,000 liras "without any indication."[60] Unfortunately, Aleramo could not survive on Deledda's generous gift and her own earnings.

As a result, on 19 December 1928, she directly wrote to Mussolini asking for financial support from the state.[61] Aleramo stoked the dictator's ego and requested a face-to-face meeting as she believed it would be more effective. She framed her qualifications through a summary of her resume: "I am [blurred out] years old (I do not show them, but I have them). I have published for 22 years, a book [*A Woman*] that has been translated into eight languages, and even today, the youth find it alive and fresh. Other books have foreign versions."[62] Framing herself as a literary

[58] "L'Aleramo è, si, una scrittrice di primo ordine, ma i suoi libri, in sostanza, ripugnano al gusto e al buon senso del virtuoso popolo italiano, amante della casa e adoratore della Famiglia." Ruinas, *Scrittrici e scribacchine d'oggi*, 60.
[59] Deledda quoted in Rossana Dedola, *Grazia Deledda: I luoghi, gli amore, le opere* (Rome: Avagliano Editore, 2016), 332.
[60] Frateili quoted in Ibid., 333.
[61] Arnoldo Mondadori to Sibilla Aleramo, 3 December 1928, Box 27, File 162.23, Fondo Aleramo Corrispondenza, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome.
[62] Sibilla Aleramo to Benito Mussolini, 19 December 1928, Box 90, File 1008.137, Fondo Aleramo Lettere di Sibilla, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome.

ambassador for Italy to Europe, she articulated that her works, old and new, had considerable cultural capital. She continued, "Today, on the eve of Christmas 1928, I have 43 liras in my purse. I have debts for some thousands of *lira*."[63] After describing her lack of support from relatives or patrons and no available saleable property, she requested patronage from the dictator himself.

Though desperately in need of money, Aleramo also (perhaps unwisely) used this letter to critique the regime's continued exclusion of women within major intellectual and artistic institutions. While criticizing the denial of women's admission to the Academy of Italy, Aleramo encouraged Mussolini to follow up on his promises of freedom to the nation. She wrote, "If Your Excellency had the intention to admit women into the Academy of Italy, I would be among the four or five possible candidates. But Your Excellency does not have this intention. However, you sincerely desire dignity and liberty for literature from Italy, without distinction of sex. Excellency, would you like to give me a means of work for a year, without economic preoccupations, for a work of art that will be my best? […] Today at [crossed out] years old, I feel in my conscience that I have gained the right to write a letter like this one."[64] Though they met the following month, Mussolini failed to admit her to the Academy and did not grant her a stipend. Eventually Aleramo did receive some support from Queen Elena, but as her frequent requests to Mondadori indicated, Aleramo was frequently broke.[65] Finally, in January 1933, she

[63] Sibilla Aleramo to Benito Mussolini, 19 December 1928.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Fiora A. Bassanese, "Sibilla Aleramo: Writing a Personal Myth," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian, Fascism, and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 162. [64] "Some notable women writers, such as Sibilla Aleramo and Ada Negri (who became a member of the Accademia d'Italia), were enthusiastic about the regime." Sharon Wood, "Women Writers," in *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*, ed. Peter Hainsworth and David Robey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Drake points to her writings in *Gioie d'occasione* (1930) as celebrating the nations "new resolute and formidable collectivity and refers

received a monthly governmental subsidy of one thousand liras; this money was desperately needed after *The Whip* did not have success in the market.[66]

Because of this request for financial assistance from the Duce himself, some literary scholars claim that Aleramo supported or, at the very least, was willing to work with the regime. The critique of Aleramo as not being sufficiently anti-Fascist, or even the accusation that she was a regime "collaborator," is a less than nuanced reading of her. Aleramo never joined the National Fascist Party (*Partito nazionale fascista*) or the Women's Fasci. Only after she started receiving a subsidy from the government in 1933 did Aleramo join the National Fascist Association of Women Artists and Graduates and the Syndicate of Authors and Writers (*il Sindacato autori e scrittori*).[67] While it cannot be ignored that she accepted this money and support, Aleramo's relationship to the regime must be read in the broader context of her life, politics, and writing. It is clear that Aleramo's politics and views were not static. Yet when analyzing *The Whip*, Aleramo used the story of a failed romance to critique the regime's problematic and oppressive views on women's subjectivity. The novel remains a testament to Aleramo's desire for authenticity and autonomy in the face of a culture that rarely conceded these to women.

Where DeGrazia (and many other scholars) judged Aleramo as being feminist before the rise of Fascism, Deledda is sometimes deemed a *de facto* feminist. Kozma writes that the Sardinian Nobel laureate's goal was "to use her art to bend and splice the details of reality in

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to post-1930 writings as examples of her "accommodation with the regime." See Drake, "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano," 264.

[66] Anna Folli, "Introduction" in Sibilla Aleramo, *Orsa minore: Note di taccuino e altre ancora* (Milan: Feltrinelli Editore, 2002), 19.

[67] Dimitri Affri and Cristiana Pipitone, *Inventario Archivio Sibilla Aleramo 1882-1960* (Rome: Fondazione Gramsci, n.d.), 3.

order to make sense of what she saw."[68] Although she did not possess a significant connection to institutional women's activism and frequently emphasized that she did not focus on politics, Deledda's works were political by virtue of documenting and critiquing the subordination of women in Italian society before and during the Fascist years. Unlike Aleramo, she was able to distance herself from the regime because of having monetary success, never needing to ask for money or patronage. As her biography shows, Deledda would elicit contempt and anger from Mussolini by virtue of refusing to write for the regime.

Inspired by short stories published at the end of the illustrated magazines her brother procured, she secretly submitted her own story without her family's knowledge. In July 1888, at 17 years old, her first piece "Sardinian Blood*"* (*"Sangue sardo*") was published in Roman magazine *The Latest Fashion* (*L'ultima moda*).[69] To Deledda's delight, she was paid for words she "would have given for free."[70] Frustrated by her family and community's traditional views on women's work and "acceptable" public engagement, writing was a saving grace for Deledda. Kozma writes that she "was psychologically invested in writing to the point where eventually it became an emotional and spiritual lifeline for her."[71] Yet she faced numerous obstacles in her professional journey. Her father encouraged her writing, perceiving it initially as a hobby, until he learned about her publications. Because her authorial pursuits scandalized and shamed her parents, Deledda surreptitiously sold olive oil from the family press, keeping half of the profits for herself, in order to earn postage money to send her writings.[72]

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[68] Janice M. Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's Eternal Adolescents: The Pathology of Arrested Maturation* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 11.
[69] Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's Eternal Adolescents*, 32.
[70] Ibid., 29.
[71] Ibid., 30.
[72] "metà alla casa, metà alla Gloria." Deledda, *Cosima*, quoted in Ibid.

Despite settling into her career, her actions scandalized both her family and community. Although many people in Nuoro could not read, they were furious that Deledda would use their lives and local dramas in her plots.[73] Still she continued to write and sell numerous pieces; she frequently contributed poems and prose to the women's journal *The Sardinian Woman* (*La Donna sarda*).[74] By the early twentieth century, Deledda's literature circulated throughout the world and appeared in translation "in Switzerland, Austria, Russia, Spain, Holland, Great Britain, and the United States."[75]

Unlike in biographies of Aleramo, Halide Edip, and Muhiddin, scholars rarely highlight Deledda's connections to women's organizations before and after the establishment of the Fascist regime. This absence or silence is most likely due to the fact that Deledda is not perceived as a political figure. In addition, scholars and readers of Deledda, historically and today, predominantly view her as a "regional" author because of her focus on Sardinia.[76] Women writers labeled "regionalist" are often of interest "not primarily for literary reasons but for […] sociological or quasi-historical interest."[77] In some ways, Deledda complicated this notion; her novels focused on Sardinia and provided a valuable lens to view local culture; the Nobel Prize committee in their 1926 commendation lauded her for the representation of her native island, in addition to her interest exploring problems of general human interest.[78] But to ignore the broader

[73] Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's Eternal Adolescents*, 33.
[74] Maria Elvira Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda: Una vita per il Nobel* (Sassari, Italy: Carlo Delfino Editore, 2016), 42.
[75] Deledda quoted in ibid., 67.
[76] In the winter of 2018, a Sardinian academic also working at ISRE in Nuoro told me that my dissertation did not make sense because Deledda was not writing about Italy nor was she writing about politics.
[77] Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, 63.
[78] "Per la sua potenza di scrittrice, sostenuta da un alto ideale, che ritrae in forme plastiche la vita quale è nella sua appartata isola natale e che con profondità e con calore tratta problema di generale interesse umano." The Swedish Academy quoted in Rossana Dedola, *Grazia Deledda*, 329.

implications of her work beyond the anthropological, particularly with regards to novels published during the *Ventennio*, fails to evaluate Deledda's politics at all.

The *Museo deleddiano* in Deledda's hometown of Nuoro displays her attendance card from the First National Congress of Italian Women (*Primo congresso delle donne italiane*) in 1908. Biographer Maria Elvira Ciusa writes that "in the mishmash of proposals, of confusion of language and people, Deledda decided to not return [to the feminist movement] and gave voice to the feminine world through recounted stories in her novels."[79] For a reportedly shy and quiet woman, one can imagine the congress was an overwhelming experience. Nevertheless, lack of affiliation and participation in women's institutional activism does not invalidate the political concerns and feminist views within her written works. Although Deledda no longer resided in Nuoro, the Nuorese Radical Party (*Partito radicale storico*) included her on its slate of candidate for the 1909 local elections.[80] Though Deledda did not know she was on the ballot, voters nevertheless used this election as a referendum on her, apparently refusing to "distinguish between Deledda's feckless characters and the author herself." Perhaps the Radical Party used Deledda for her celebrity (in any event it backfired) or they perhaps viewed her as sympathetic to their views. In the end, she received just 34 votes.[81]

Prior to the *Ventennio*, Deledda frequently emphasized her support for the equality of women in society. In 1911, the same year she publicly supported divorce[82], an interviewer for

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[79] CNDI organized this congress. Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda*, 110.
[80] It became a full-fledged group in 1904 under the leadership of Ettore Sacchi and advocated for the complete separation between Church and State, opposition to colonialism/imperialism, universal suffrage for men and women, and women's social and labor emancipation. See Alessandro Galante Garrone, *I radicali in Italia (1849-1925)* (Milan: Garzanti, 1973), 128-30.
[81] Deledda did not know that she was submitted as a candidate. Jan Kozma, "Grazia Deledda: A life," in *The Challenge of Modernity: Essays on Grazia Deledda*, ed. Sharon Wood (Leicester: Troubador, 2007), 27.
[82] Deledda shared her support for divorce in the newspaper *Tribuna* (*Tribune*). See Neria Di Giovanni, *L'ora di Lilith: Su Grazia Deledda e la letteratura femminile del secondo Novecento* (Rome: Ellemme, 1987), 65-8.

New anthology asked about her stance on the value of feminism. She replied, "I write novels and short stories; this is my specialty. I find it well and good that women think, study and work."[83] Though she restricted her views on feminism to the production and content of her work, Italian women active in the suffrage movement claimed Deledda as one of their own. In 1919, suffrage proponent Margherita Ancona stated that Deledda was recruited into the suffrage movement in the 1880s alongside notable figures including Dr. Ada Sacchi Simonetti, Maria Montessori, and Ersilia Majno [Bronzini]. Ancona continued, "The opponents of woman suffrage are fond of saying that there has never been any woman suffrage movement in Italy. They have in their minds the militant movement (the only one they seemed to be aware of)."[84] In this more comprehensive conceptualization of a women's movement, as one not limited to purely militant activism, Deledda's literature constituted a form of engagement with feminist politics in the last years before the *Ventennio*.

Whether intentional or circumstantial, Deledda's links to suffrage-minded groups persisted into the 1920s. At the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA)'s 1923 Congress in Rome, the event's organizers included Deledda on their "Committee of Honor"; its president was Benito Mussolini. Other committee members included Maria Montessori; writers Matilde Serao, Clarice Tartufari, and Cordula "Lina" Poletti; and Margherita Sarfatti, cultural *doyenne* and the Duce's mistress.[85] Some "non-celebrity" members carried the titles of "doctor," "lawyer," "baroness," "marchioness," and "professor." It is unclear if Deledda attended the

[83] Deledda quoted in Kozma, *Grazia Deledda's Eternal Adolescents*, 156.
[84] Margherita Ancona, "History of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Italy (1863-1919)," *Jus Suffragii: The International Woman Suffrage News* (October 1919), 4.
[85] Program – IX. Congresso dell'alleanza internazionale pro suffragio femminile (Roma, 12-19 maggio 1923), 2. Found in Consiglio nazionale donne italiane (1907-2006) Box 52, Folder 8, Archivi di partiti, sindacati, movimenti, associazioni e comitati, Archivio centrale dello stato, Rome.

proceedings of the 1923 Congress as a member of this committee, but we can infer that at the very least she read about it in the press, since major national newspapers covered the congress on their front pages.

It is important to consider that figures active within the suffrage movement viewed Deledda as someone who supported their efforts for women's emancipation in Italian society. From the Radical Party's inclusion of the author on their elections list to her honorary membership in the IWSA, one wonders if organizations foisted their politics onto Deledda. When reading her novels alongside the extant historical and archival records, however, it is clear her novels expressed sympathy towards the goals of many of these reform-minded groups. In the early years of the *Ventennio*, Deledda actively tried to avoid institutional politics, and as a result, her novels rarely receive attention as documents of political expression or the Fascist experience. Like Aleramo, she had to navigate her professional career and writing when questioned about her relationship to the regime, as she was in a 1926 interview with Stanis Ruinas for the *de facto* state paper *The Fascist Regime* (*Il regime fascista*).[86] After describing the plot of her current work-in-progress, *Annalena Bilsini*, Ruinas asked for her "impressions of Fascism." She replied, "I have never dealt with or deal with politics. Certainly, Fascism is the most important political upheaval of these times. I am a very fervent admirer of Benito Mussolini, that he is the political genius most representative of our world today."[87] Deledda's commentary on Fascism articulated a conscientiousness about rupture and change in society. Her positive judgment of Mussolini

[86] The interview was surely conducted before the announcement of her Nobel Prize victory as the article makes no mention of it. According to Ciusa, the Swedish Academy telephoned the Madesani-Deledda house on the evening of 10 November 1926. See Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda*, 165.

[87] "'Io non mi sono occupata mai né mi occupo di politica,' mi ha risposto la insigne artista. 'Certo, il fascismo è il rivolgimento politico più grandioso di questi tempi. Sono una ferventissima ammiratrice di Benito Mussolini, che è il genio politico più rappresentativo del mondo d'oggi.'" Stanis Ruinas, "Grazia Deledda ci parla della sua vita," *Il Regime Fascista* (3 November 1926), 3.

perhaps came from a position of not having any other option but to praise him in a *de facto* state publication. Her future interactions with the dictator, particularly after her Nobel Prize victory, showed that she did not wish to work for or support the regime personally.

After her Nobel victory, Deledda met with Mussolini. At Palazzo Venezia, the writer and dictator exchanged portraits. He asked her if the regime could do anything for her to which she responded, "Nothing. If you could return from imprisonment a good and fine man."[88] The individual in question was Elia Sanna Mannironi, a friend and fellow Sardinian who was imprisoned for anti-Fascist activities.[89] Mussolini did free Mannironi the next day and Deledda would not reveal to her friend until February 1928 that she personally requested his freedom.[90] At the end of the same meeting, an aide suggested that she write something for the regime. She responded, "art does not have politics ("*L'arte non ha politica*")." In both her interview with Ruinas and this meeting with Mussolini, Deledda asserted the non-politics of her work as a rhetorical device to avoid either being coopted by or receiving the enmity of the regime. If her novels were not talking about the politics of the day, the regime lacked grounds to limit her artistic autonomy. Although willing to free her friend, Mussolini was furious about her refusal to write for the regime. Immediately after the meeting, he ordered that bookstores were not to publicize Deledda's works. As a result, her editor at Treves informed her that her sales had noticeably decreased.[91] The dictator clearly disagreed with the author; in the *Ventennio*, life and art had politics and they needed to be Fascist.

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[88] "'Niente. Si poteva far ritornare dal confine un uomo buono e giusto.'" Deledda quoted in Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda*, 165. Kozma also mentions this encounter with Mussolini in *Eternal Adolescents*, 36 and 176.
[89] Anders Hallengren, "Appendix B: Grazia Deledda, Voice of Sardinia: The First Italian Woman to Receive the Nobel Prize in Literature," in *Eleonora Duse and* Cenere *(*Ashes*): Centennial* Essays, ed. Maria Pia Pagani and Paul Fryer, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2017), 154.
[90] Deledda quoted in Dedola, *Grazia Deledda*, 341.
[91] Ciusa, *Grazia Deledda*, 166.

Deledda continued to oppose the regime in small moments of resistance. In what remains the shortest Nobel Prize acceptance speech ever given, Deledda only saluted the King of Sweden, the King of Italy, and cheered "*Viva la Svezia, viva l'Italia!*"[92] Mussolini was not mentioned. At the same time, literary scholar Sharon Wood notes that contemporary Marxist critics of her time faulted Deledda for her "failure to deal fully with social and political questions."[93] Yet this criticism misses the complex layers of her work. But as scholars like Jan Kozma, Sharon Wood, and Alba Amoia note, Deledda also wrote about the "new woman" who was "courageous, self-assured, free to love, and free to express herself through art."[94] The young women's wing of the Church's Catholic Action (*Azione cattolica*)—the only non-Party organization permitted under Fascism after 1927—warned young girls and women against reading Deledda's novels because of their "heady passions" (failed romances, divorce, etc.) as opposed to examining how her writing commented on life's complications, tragedies, and victories.[95] Yet as the *Ventennio* progressed, Fascist literary critics downplayed Deledda's potentially transgressive plots and instead framed her as fulfilling appropriate gender norms. Ruinas complimentarily wrote, "She is, above all, a woman, a woman *all'antica*—traditionally Italian [i.e. a modest wife and mother]."[96] This range of judgements on Deledda's works show that her readers ascribed their own politics to her fiction in order to perpetuate their own agendas. With her international acclaim, the Fascists could point to Deledda as a useful

[92] Newspaper clipping "Il premio Nobel 1926 a Grazia Deledda: La solenne cerimonia raccontata nelle lettere al figliolo Franz" (n.d.), RIT 251, ISRE, Nuoro, Sardinia, Italy.
[93] Sharon Wood, "Locations, relocation and dislocations: (dis)placing Grazia Deledda," in *The Challenge of Modernity: Essays on Grazia Deledda*, ed. Sharon Wood (Leicester, UK: Troubador, 2007), 5.
[94] Alba Amoia, *20th-Century Italian Women Writers: The Feminine Experience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 8.
[95] This group was the girls' branch of Catholic Action. The organization was under the control of bishops and encouraged lay Catholic participation. Wood, "Locations, relocations and dislocations," 6.
[96] Deledda had two sons Sardus and Franz. See Ruinas, *Scrittrici e scribacchine d'oggi*, 41.

ambassador to the rest of the world; conversely feminists and suffrage-supporters could emphasize that her plots featuring marginalized women decried the suppression of women's autonomy during the *Ventennio*.

Within the majority of literary studies focusing on Deledda's oeuvre, most scholars analyze her novels published before 1920 *or* her posthumous autobiographical novel *Cosima* (1937). Of Deledda's sixty-one published books, eighteen were published after 1921. Though literary scholar Jan Kozma points to the years between 1903 and 1920 as "Deledda's most productive period," this periodization does not erase the content and significance of these works published during the *Ventennio*.[97] In documenting contemporary life and its complexities, Deledda developed fictional characters who addressed concerns women faced in Fascist Italy: confusion over their purported role in society/the household; the frequent denial of women's agency by male figures; and an earnest desire to understand they wanted out of life, not what the regime dictated.

Unlike Aleramo and Deledda, Maria Messina's life and politics are more difficult to trace in both archival and secondary sources. After her death, her only remaining relatives were nieces Annie and Nora Messina. After Annie died at the age of 86 in 1996, she left only an A4 page containing biographical study references and some distant memories of Messina and requested that all other papers be burned.[98] Perhaps for this reason or others, Messina's life and literature

[97] Jan Kozma, "Grazia Deledda: A Life," 29.
[98] Lara Gocchin Raffaelli, "Una storia approfondita: Le lettere di Maria Messina ad Alessio Di Giovanni ed Enrico Bemporad (1910-1940). *Italica* 86, no. 3 (2009): 339. I did find a few documents about Messina in *Archivio storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore (AME)* at *Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori* in Milan but they only contained information about her publishing history. See "Elenco inadempienze della C.E. Mondadori verso la S.I.A.E," 12 March 1934, Folder Società italiana autori ed editori (SIAE), AME, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milan and "Solleciti rendiconti vari autori per gli anni 1931-1932 e 1933" (n.d.), Folder Società italiana autori ed editori (SIAE), AME, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori.

are less frequently studied than those of Aleramo or Deledda. Literary scholars today view her politics and relationship to Fascism as ambiguous; she was not outwardly critical of the regime, but her novels suggested a deep frustration with gender roles for women in Italian society writ large. In contrast with Aleramo and Deledda, we do not know if Messina had links to suffrage or emancipationist women's groups. Literary scholar Lara Gochin Raffaelli explores Messina's acquaintance with activist and writer Gina Lombroso Ferrero as a means to show the tensions and ambiguities of Messina's politics. Lombroso Ferrero was the daughter of Cesare Lombroso, Italian criminologist and sociologist; she herself received a medical degree and authored numerous works. Her husband Guglielmo Ferrero was a staunchly anti-fascist historian, journalist, and novelist.[99] In 1917, Lombroso Ferrero founded the Educational Association of Italian Women (ADDI, *L'associazione divulgativa donne italiane*) which had the express goal of encouraging "Italian women to take part in the scientific, social, political, [and] philosophical development of the country."[100] Based upon an address list found in the ADDI's archive, Messina was a member of this organization.[101]

Despite the author's limited biography, her link to ADDI provides a glimpse of Messina's concern for the status of women in Italian society. It seems likely, based on both this connection and the content of her novels, that Messina did not support the Fascist regime's gender politics.

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[99] Guglielmo Ferrero (1871-1942) studied law at the University of Pisa and traveled extensively abroad – the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, and the United States among others. Ferrero believed that every dictatorship was a form of illegitimate government and after the death of Matteotti in 1924, he contributed to the edited volume *G. Matteotti nel primo anniversario del suo martirio.* In the same year, Ferrero (like Aleramo) signed Croce's Manifesto of the Anti-Fascist Intellectuals. Placed under house arrest, he finally left Italy after receiving a professorship in Geneva. He died in exile in 1942. See Piero Treves, "Ferrero, Guglielmo," in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (1997).

[100] Patrizia Guarnieri, *Italian Psychology and Jewish Emigration under Fascism: From Florence to Jerusalem and New York* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 163.

[101] Gochin Raffaelli, "Una storia approfondita," 350.

Like Deledda, literary critics categorize Messina as a writer of *verismo*. This literary movement, beginning in the 1870s, sought to "represent reality as it really was and to provide human documents."[102] Within *verismo*, writers frequently provided political commentary on Italian society, cognizant of women's subordinate role as a result of various constraints, such as lack of economic opportunities, and marriage as "the only means available to women to fit in society."[103] Because her archival and press record from the *Ventennio* is minimal, historians can analyze and recover her politics through her fiction. She used her pen to interact and share her views with the world, criticizing the perpetuation of women's marginalization under the Fascists. Literary scholars Pausini and Giovanna Miceli Jeffries argue that Messina's novels emphasized female protagonists being victimized, trapped by constraints of the patriarchy, and lacking identity; these characters either killed themselves or passively accepted their fates.[104] Seen from another perspective, however, so-called passivity *and* suicide can be read as feminist forms of resistance. Her works, especially *A Flower that did not bloom* (*Un fiore che non fiorì*, 1923) and *Love denied* (*L'amore negato*, 1928), expressed a deep frustration with a culture that demanded women's continued subordination to men. Within her novels, Messina—who lived with multiple sclerosis—challenged Fascist and traditional conceptions of masculinity and societal norms that denied women's bodily, political, and emotional autonomy.

Like Aleramo, Halide Edip's writing career also began in journalism. In addition to working as a translator, she wrote not only for women's magazines, but also for other major

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[102] Cristina Pausini, "Verismo," in *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Italian Literature*, ed. Rinaldina Russell (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 345.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid. See also Giovanna Miceli Jeffries, "Messina, Maria (1897-1944)," in *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Italian Literature*, ed. Rinaldina Russell (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 202.

Ottoman periodicals as their *only* woman writer—*Tanın*, *Türk Yurdu*, *Büyük Mecmua*, and *Servet-i Fünun*—during the Young Turk Era.[105] In her English version of 1923's *The Shirt of Flame* (*Ateşten Gömlek*), Halide Edip enlisted American friend Florence Billings to write its introduction. Billings effusively praised and heralded Halide Edip as a trailblazer, writing, "Halidé Hanum [sic] is not only the first Turkish novelist, but also the first Turkish woman, to take an active interest in politics."[106] Billings generously embellished her friend's achievements (her first novel was not published until 1910 and thus she was not the first Ottoman/Turkish woman novelist), but it was true that Halide Edip's engagement in women's organizations proved to have a lasting impact on her political activism. She joined numerous groups established in the wake of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, whether groups for women like the Women's Red Crescent (akin to the American Red Cross) and Society for the Elevation of Women (*Teali-i Nisvan*), which provided vocational training for women and organized military nursing opportunities or nationalist-oriented entities like Turkish Homeland (*Türk Yurdu*) and Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*).[107] Between 1909 and 1913, she published multiple novels-among them *Raik's Mother* (*Raik'in Annesi*, 1909), *Seviyye Talip* (1910), *Handan* (1912), and *New Turan* (*Yeni Turan* 1912)-which all advocated for women's liberation.[108] After the Turkish

[105] Derya İner, "Gaining a Public Voice," 978.
[106] Halide Edip fluently spoke and wrote in English. Billings (1879-1959) belonged to a Massachusetts abolitionist family and was a relative of Sophia Smith, the founder of Smith College. Billings graduated from Stanford in 1903 and started working at the American School for Girls in Bursa, Turkey in 1919. Active with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions' Near East Relief (NER) program, Billings helped with efforts to assist Armenian refugees after the genocide. During the Turkish War of Independence, Billings was the NER representative in Ankara. It was likely here where she made the acquaintance of both Halide Edip and Mustafa Kemal. A collection of Billings' personal papers from her time in Turkey and the broader Middle East are housed at the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. Florence Billings, "Introduction," in Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, (New York: Duffield & Company, 1924), x.
[107] Reina Lewis and Nancy Micklewright, ed., *Gender, Modernity and Liberty: Middle Eastern and Western Women's Writings: a Critical Sourcebook* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 8.
[108] Hülya Adak, "Intersubjectivity: Halide Edib (1882-1964) or the "Ottoman/Turkish (Woman)" as the Subject of Knowledge" (PhD Dissertation: University of Chicago, 2001), 110.

defeat in the Balkan War in 1913, Halide Edip delivered a series of lectures that the popular journal *Turkish Nation* (*Türk Yurdu*) published under the titles of *Nations after Disaster* (*Felaketten sonra milletler*).[109] Her institutional affiliations and novels blended her interests in women's public social engagement and nationalist ideology.

After the Allied occupation of Istanbul ended in March 1920, Halide Edip fled to Anatolia to join Mustafa Kemal's Nationalist movement. Billings wrote that she initially had a position in the government, but male leaders felt that "Anatolia as a whole was as yet too conservative for such an innovation."[110] Though subsequently excluded from formal, institutional politics or "public affairs," as Billings called it, she was "'in' everything and constantly writing."[111] Because of her experiences during the War of Independence, Halide Edip had a personal—if complicated—relationship with the Turkish leader. Although allies in the War of Independence, she found herself targeted by Mustafa Kemal during his transition to dictatorship in the mid-1920s, because the leader perceived Halide Edip and her husband Dr. Adnan as political rivals and threats to his power. In letters sent to Billings in 1924, Halide Edip hinted at growing tensions within the Kemalist political elite. She adamantly told Billings that she held no office and that she had no intention of seeking one. The Turkish writer emphasized that she was focused on her novels as opposed to having institutional political aspirations:

> I donot [sic] fancy article writing very much. I have been feverishly busy since my return from Munich in novel writing. The second is being published as a serial the first has already appeared […] All have been immensely popular and very much in demand and I may after all develop a [conceit] that I am not going to be out of fashion even after the publication of my eleventh novel.[112]

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[109] Alexander Safarian, "On the History of Turkish Feminism," *Iran & the Caucasus* 11, no. 1 (2007): 146.
[110] Billings, "Introduction," xiii.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Halide Edip to Florence Billings, 27 March 1924, Box 1, Folder 7, Florence Billings papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

While Halide Edip's words could be taken as self-aggrandizement or hyperbole, this quotation suggests several things. First, her emphasis on a preference for fiction over non-fiction or journalism suggested her belief in the possibility of using the novel to avoid censure and still express her opinions. For the studied Turkish authors, the extent of readership and reception is very hard to ascertain. Unlike in Fascist Italy, where there was a culture of book reviews, a similarly robust tradition did not exist in 1920s Turkey. Though we may not have formal critical responses to her work, we can extrapolate that because Halide Edip published numerous novels successfully within her lifetime that there was some demand for her work. Based upon the date of this letter, the novels to which she referred were most likely *Strike the Whore!* (*Vurun Kahpeye!*, 1923) and *Heartache* (*Kalp Ağrısı*, 1924).[113] Not only did she publish novels in Turkish, but she also self-translated or sought to have her novels translated into English.[114] Halide Edip believed it was important to share her writing and ideas with a broader readership, both Turkish and international, at least in part to share her views on social and political transformations in the new republic.

From 1924 onward, there was a significant pause in Halide Edip's writing because of political turmoil in Turkey. She and her husband Dr. Adnan were accused in a conspiracy against Mustafa Kemal. While she opposed the dictatorial turn, she adamantly denied any participation in such schemes. In June 1926, Halide Edip wrote to Billings of a purported assassination plot against Mustafa Kemal. She said, "Confessions were extracted (rather dictated by torture I

[113] In the letter, she provided an extensive synopsis of *Vurun Kahpeye!* (*Strike the Whore!*) and expressed a hope that it would be of interest in translation to an American audience. This correspondence with Billings also illuminates some of Edip's writing process. It appears that she wrote her novels in their entirety before publishing them serially in Turkish newspapers. Halide Edip to Florence Billings, 27 March 1924.
[114] Halide Edip to Florence Billings, 3 July 1923, Box 1, Folder 7, Florence Billings papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.

believe) from Zi[y]a Hurshit [Hurşit] that the progressives, the old opposition in the Assembly (in your time) and some of the prominent members of the Unionists are in plot. The whole lot are arrested."[115] Since Mustafa Kemal—referred to here as "the Gazi"—conducted Ziya Hurşit's trial himself, Halide Edip argued, "It is a rather clumsily arranged villainy by the Gazi. How far he will go will be known in a week I believe."[116] Her former ally had turned on her friends and peers, leaving her frightened for the future.

Months later, in November 1926, Halide Edip shared with Billings a copy of her correspondence with the American historian Edward Mead Earle.[117] In her letter, she notified the professor of the execution of Javid [Mehmet Cavit Bey], ordered by the Kemalist regime, and the subsequent struggles of his wife and family.[118] She informed Earle that she was working on the second volume of her memoirs and that she would be "strictly and dispassionately fair and true to the past services of M. Kemal, but history also must know what he has done to Turkey and Turks with a pack of ordinary murderers and brigands as his henchmen. Of course the constant

[115] Ziya Hurşit (1892-1926) volunteered in the Turkish War of Independence and was one of the first members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Halide Edip to Florence Billings, 26 June 26, 1926, Box 1, Folder 7, Florence Billings papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.
[116] Halide Edip to Florence Billings, 26 June 1926, Box 1, Folder 7, Florence Billings papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.
[117] Earle (1894-1954) received his PhD in history from Columbia in 1923 after returning from service in the First World War. His first book *Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Bagdad Railway: A Study in Imperialism* (New York: Macmillan, 1923) documented the influence of markets and power in the construction of the railway. Earle was "critical of imperial competition and the tensions it inspires." He taught at Columbia throughout the 1920s and published extensively on the Near East. In 1930, he was selected as one of the first scholars to join the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton University where he became a friend of Albert Einstein. Earle is considered one of the founders of modern security studies. See David Ekbladh, "Present at the Creation: Edward Mead Earle and the Depression-Era Origins of Security Studies," *International Security* 36, no. 3 (2011/12): 107-41, jstor.org/stable/41428111.
[118] Mehmet Cavid Bey (1875-1926) was an Ottoman economist, newspaper editor, and politician of *dönme* descent. Prior to the 1908 Revolution, he joined the CUP and was a deputy representing Salonika and Çannakale. After the First World War, he represented the Ottoman Empire in financial negotiations with the victors.

peril of Italy and Greece from outside keeps the Turks silent under the present martyrdom."[119] The "Italian threat" proved more complicated than Halide Edip's rendering of the situation. Nevertheless, she emphasized that Turkish citizens did not have the freedom to express opposition in the face of Mustafa Kemal's dictatorial turn, out of concern for the nation's international security writ large.

Perhaps because of Halide Edip's well-known international relationships, she and her husband were spared. As she wrote to Earle,

> Dr. Adnan is acquitted, his acquittal is as ridiculous as he is being called to Angora to answer for a semi concocted sham plot which has happened a full two years after he had left the country […] The reason for the acquittal I believe is partly because of Adnan's really saintly personal prestige, and also out of fear of exciting us to make publications against them.[120]

Both the regime and the author knew that her words carried weight in Anatolia and beyond. Nevertheless, the toll of the dictatorial turn had a profound emotional and psychological impact on her. Halide Edip wrote of her husband's heartbreak at the death of his best friends and fears for more murders of acquaintances ("Kemal will find some pretext to kill them in some other way").[121] Halide Edip also informed Billings of the pains she had to take to protect herself and her family, explaining, "I cannot tell you what a "costly mask" I had to wear during those hard days. Whatever happens I want to see the show to the end and play the game hard and fair. But I have more frequent longings to desert and march off to eternal rest."[122] Her love of country was evident in both her personal writings and fiction, and the "costly mask" perhaps was the

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[119] She sent a copy of a letter to Professor Earle while in London. Halide Edip to Florence Billings, 5 November 1926, Box 1, Folder 7, Florence Billings papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.

explanation for a major pause in novel publication after 1926. Tragically for Halide Edip and her husband Dr. Adnan, they were forced to leave Turkey until 1939. In his 1927 *Speech* (*Nutuk*), Mustafa Kemal used a letter, dated 10 August 1919, in which Halide Edip expressed her support for an American mandate of Anatolia, to characterize her as a traitor or *mandacı.*[123] Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Halide Edip was a persona non grata in Kemalist Turkey.

Though earlier in the decade she claimed that she preferred writing novels to articles, Halide Edip turned to nonfiction once in exile to inform an American audience of Mustafa Kemal's authoritarian politics. In her 1929 article for the *Yale Review* entitled "Dictatorship and Reform in Turkey," Halide Edip wrote, "The long tradition of oppression and spies became at once part of the new regime […] what is of supreme interest is the change of a democratic state, of five years' standing, into a dictatorial one without even an altering of the form or the closing of the National Assembly."[124] Where the Kemalist regime emphasized a sharp break with the Ottoman past, despite many members of the government previously serving in the Ottoman parliament or were members of the CUP prior to the First World War, Halide Edip emphasized *la plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

Halide Edip is particularly significant to this study because she had a vastly different relationship to politics and feminism than almost all of her Turkish peers. Halide Edip framed "feminism" or a "feminist" as a supporter of suffrage. As such, she did not consider herself to be one. Billings wrote that, "Every prominent foreigner who comes to Constantinople wants to visit

[123] Ghazi Moustafa Kemal Pascha, *Discours du Ghazi Moustafa Kemal Président de la République turque* (Leipzig: K.F. Koehler Verlag, 1929), 70-4. *Mandacı* means "someone who supported the mandate." See Adak, "National Myths and Self-Na(rra)tions: Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* and Halide Edib's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2-3 (2003): 511.
[124] Halide Edip, "Dictatorship and Reform in Turkey," *Yale Review* 19 (1929), 28.

her and is generally surprised to find her so little the 'suffragette.'"[125] While Halide Edip wanted women to have opportunities for education and Western progress along the lines of ending polygamy, she forcefully argued that Turkey was far more progressive than Europe in terms of women's equity within society. At the same time, Halide Edip recognized her status as privileged insofar as her relationship to education and ability to access freedoms promised by the new Turkish Civil Code of 1926, acknowledging that "uneducated women naturally could not profit from it."[126] Still, in comparison with Nezihe Muhiddin who vocally advocated for the enfranchisement of women, she did not. Instead, she presented a surprising logic behind her views towards suffrage. She wrote, "It is perhaps a blessing that they [Turkish women] have not obtained the vote. Thus they have been protected from the danger of being identified with party politics, and their activities outside the political world could not be stopped for political reasons."[127] In her calculations, Turkish women could work, go to school, and exist within the public sphere safely because they could not get drawn into political binarism that saw the execution of many of her colleagues and friends. At the same time, it is important to remember that the majority of her writings after 1924 were completed outside of Turkey. Had she remained, both she and Dr. Adnan faced the potential for imprisonment and/or execution. While she cheered the progress of women's status through the Civil Code, it is important to read her thoughts alongside Derviş and Muhiddin's fiction; she represented views that more closely aligned with the regime, despite sincere moments of concern for and critique of the character and nature of gender politics and reform.

[125] Billings, "Introduction," xvi.
[126] Halide Edip, "Dictatorship and Reform in Turkey," 33.
[127] Ibid., 35.

Supported by her family and aided by increased social opportunities for Ottoman women during the Hamidian and Young Turk eras, Nezihe Muhiddin entered the public sphere as a working woman. Despite not graduating from the Teacher's School (*Öğretmen Okulu*), she appealed to the Ministry of Education, passed their entrance examination, and worked as a natural science teacher at a secondary school for girls in Istanbul.[128] Of the six studied authors, Muhiddin was the most active in institutional feminist politics. In the years leading up to the First World War, she actively participated in women's groups that promoted Ottoman causes. In the last months of 1922, with the end of the Turkish War of Independence in sight, Muhiddin and other supporters of women's rights decided to create an organization to promote a suffragist agenda.[129] The Women's People's Party (KHF; *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası*) was established in June 1923 with the explicit goal to elevate the status of women in Turkish society. KHF sought to win seats in the newly established parliament and defend women's political and social rights at the national level.[130] When the Kemalist government refused to recognize the KHF, Muhiddin and other members shifted its orientation and renamed it the Turkish Women's Union (TKB; *Türk Kadın Birliği*). Though not a formal political party, the TKB continued to advocate for women's rights and softened some of its rhetoric by not demanding the immediate enfranchisement of women.

As the president of the TKB, Muhiddin developed connection to feminists and suffrage supporters around the world. The International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA)'s monthly

[128] The school was *Kız İdadi Mektebi ve Darülmuallimât*. Serpil Çakır, "Muhittin, Nezihe (1889-1958)," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006) 356.
[129] Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap*, 119.
[130] Ibid., 127.

journal *Jus Suffragii* featured a profile of Muhiddin in November 1925. In the spectacularly titled "A Daughter of the New World Meets a Daughter of the Old," Australian IWSA member Margaret Darnley Naylor reported on her meeting with "this courageous feminist leader" and was effusive in her praise: "Tall, dark and good-looking, with plenty of short, black hair," Muhiddin "spoke excellent French, and entertained us with Turkish coffee and cigarettes. To look at her it was difficult to believe that we were in Turkey."[131] Naylor's description demonstrated how one of the major international women's suffrage groups marginalized and stereotyped members from non-Christian contexts. Naylor and presumably many of *Jus Suffragii*'s readers viewed Muhiddin and Turkey through an Orientalist lens, where women had only recently been "emancipated" from the harem; it was then surprising to read of a woman who spoke French and smoked cigarettes. Naylor reported Mustafa Kemal's "support" for the women's movement—a very charitable and generous reading—and shared stories of the Kemalist modernization project, including the recent fez ban. Muhiddin and the TKB received praise for their charitable efforts and their courage for "overthrowing centuries of traditions."[132] The efforts mentioned by Naylor indicated that the TKB tried to negotiate with the government. In order to meet with ministers and deputies and to contribute to reports on legal questions, they also continued to engage in "traditional" women's philanthropic activities. Such efforts sought to serve social needs and also demonstrate to the regime that they could be patient and non-threatening to the new order. In the following year (1926), the IWSA recognized the TKB as an affiliate member of the organization.

[131] Margaret Darnley Naylor, "A Daughter of the New World Meets a Daughter of the Old: The Growth of the Feminist Movement in Turkey," *Jus Suffragii: The International Woman Suffrage News* (November 1925), 19.
[132] Ibid.

Muhiddin's writing career followed a different trajectory than the other studied authors. Prior to the Kemalist era, Muhiddin only wrote one novel, *Lost Youth* (*Şebab-ı Tebah*), in 1911. Ostensibly during the early 1920s, her commitments to the TKB did not enable her to pursue her aspirations as a novelist. While the president of the TKB, she also served as the editor of the organization's journal *Turkish Woman's Path* (*Türk Kadın Yolu*) where she frequently contributed an editor's note. Muhiddin wrote pieces on numerous topics ranging from womanhood, child welfare, fashion, and economics.[133] By 1927, Muhiddin and the TKB renewed their interest in being involved in national, institutional politics and unsuccessfully promoted a male candidate during parliamentary elections.[134] As a result, Muhiddin became the subject of intense public criticism. The Istanbul municipal government accused her of misusing TKB funds, and between 1927 and 1928, she found herself in and out of court several times; these cases were always "thrown out because of evidentiary issues."[135] In 1927, at the first signs of trouble, or rather the first opportunity to sideline Muhiddin, the TKB held new elections, choosing Latife Bekir as its new president. The board's first act was to remove Muhiddin from the organization. Her vocal calls for women's emancipation vis-à-vis the franchise threatened the

[133] See the following articles in *Türk Kadın Yolu*: "*Cumhuriyet'in Türk Kadınlığı üzerinde feyzi*" ("The Republic's prosperity on Turkish womanhood"; 23 Temmuz 1925); "*Çocuklarımız bakımsızdır*" ("Our children are neglected"; 23 Temmuz 1925); "*Kadınlar ve Tayyare İanesi*" ("Women's and Airplane Assistance"; 30 Temmuz 1925); "*Memleketin işlerinde vahdet*" ("Uniqueness in our country's affairs"; 13 Ağustos 1925); "*Cumhuriyet'in yaratıcı kudreti*" ("The Republic's creative power"; 15 Eylül 1925); "*Dünya kadınlığı çalışıyor*" ("World womanhood working"; 15 Eylül 1926); "*Türk kadınlığı ve iktisadiyatımız*" ("Turkish womanhood and our economics"; 1 Teşrin-i Evvel 1926); "*Balolarda kadın kıyafeti*" ("Women's costume at balls"; 15 Kanun-ı Sani 1927). See Nevin Yurdserver Ateş, ed., *Kadın Yolu/Türk Kadın Yolu (1925-1927) Yeni Harflerle* (Istanbul: Kadın Eserleri ve Kütuphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı Yayınları, 2009).

[134] Arzu Öztürkmen "The Women's Movement under Ottoman and Republican Rule: A Historical Reappraisal," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 4 (2013): 259.

[135] Kathryn Libal, "Staging Turkish Women's Emancipation: Istanbul, 1935." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 36.

existence of the group which sought to remain moderate and in the good graces of the Kemalist regime.

This dissertation contends that Muhiddin turned to fiction when denied a public political platform. *My Self is Mine!* (*Benliğim Benimdir!*, 1929) appeared just two years after she was removed from office, and her next title was the nonfiction work *The Turkish Woman* (*Türk Kadını*, 1930). In this text, Muhiddin not only framed herself as *the* central figure for the Turkish women's movement but she simultaneously attempted to appease Mustafa Kemal. If indeed Muhiddin wanted this book to be her reentry into institutional politics, her attempt was unsuccessful, as she never reclaimed a position in the TKB. From 1931 to 1944, she wrote and published fifteen novels. Her prolific output suggests that there was a market for her fiction and that Muhiddin used the novel to engage with questions of politics and gender when blocked from participating in institutional politics. Indeed, Marxist writer Kemal Tahir wrote in 1936 that Nezihe [Muhiddin] frequently commented on women's politics, "shouting from the top of her lungs about the degree to which women have progressed."[136] Seemingly intellectually and politically engaged men viewed her s a nuisance. Even when on the margins of the Turkish political scene, Muhiddin continued to advocate for her views.

As a result of contemporary interest in an "early Turkish feminist hero," Muhiddin was the subject of the 2018 documentary, *The Sin of Being a Woman* (*Kadın Olmanın Günahı*). In an interview, director Ümran Safter spoke about the challenges in researching Muhiddin. As the director explained, the author

[136] "Kadın yazıcı denilince eskiden gözümün önüne - neden yalan söyleyim - bir eli çenesinde, diğeri kitabın yapraklarında yaşmaklı bir hanımefendi gelirdi. Yahut ta kadınlar birliği salonlarında türk kadınının ne dereceye terakki ettiğine dair gırtlak paralyan bayan Nezihe Muhittin." Kemal Tahir, *Namık Kemal için diyorlar ki* (Istanbul, n.p., 1936), 27

> does not have any relations alive today […] The final years of her life are a complete black hole and we could not gather any information on especially the last ten years of her life […] Reports on how she died are still unestablished. According to some historians, she died in a mental institution in Istanbul. Meanwhile, some family members [at the time of her death] say that she died of [a] heart attack at home. Unfortunately, we could not verify this information because archives of the institution were destroyed. We also could not discover what happened to Nezihe Muhiddin's special archive and her library.[137]

Similar to Messina, without available personal archives or testimony from relatives or acquaintances, it is essential to turn to Muhiddin's novels. With her public political platform taken away, Muhiddin used her literature to advocate for women's rights in Early Republican Turkey and express her critique of the Kemalist regime.

Suat Derviş's writing career also began with journalism. Her biographer Liz Behmoaras writes that during the 1920s, Derviş's mind was in other places, not focusing on feminism or socialism.[138] Behmoaras compares Derviş with Muhiddin ("serious-expressioned, auburn-haired, long-nosed") who believed women's military service ("askerlik yapması") was natural. In a 1922 article appearing in *İkdam*, Derviş presented her own version of the "ideal Republican woman": "Let us hope that in these newly opened professional paths for Turkish women, they show the bravery, perseverance, and dignity until they enter them […] In that path, they strive to demonstrate their most precious qualities, the beauty of their femininity, charm, reputation, and they must not become mannish."[139] While attending school in interwar Berlin, she contributed

[137] Since this documentary is not available for streaming, I have not yet seen it. Merve Pehlivan, "Nezihe Muhiddin's Sin of Being a Woman: A Conversation with Director Ümran Safter," *Bosphorus Review of Books* https://bosphorusreview.com/the-sin-of-being-a-woman-in-conversation-with-director-mran-safter.
[138] "Zira o yıllarda Suat'ın aklı ciddi şekilde feminizmde veya sosyalizmde değil bambaşka yerlerdeydi." Liz Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş: Efsane Bir Kadın ve Dönemi* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2008), 78-9.
[139] "Ümit edelim ki, Türk kadınlığı önüne yeni yeni açılan bu meslek yollarında o yollara girinceye kadar gösterdiği cesaret, sebat ve vakarla ilerleyecektir [...] O yolda en kıymetli meziyetlerini, kadınlıklarının güzelliğini, füsununu, şöhretini ispat etmeğe ve erkekleşmemeye gayret etmelidirler." Suat Derviş, *İkdam* (21 Teşrinievvel 1338 [1922]), 3 quoted in Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 74.

articles to German periodicals well into the 1930s, including *Der Querschnitt* and *UHU*.[140] Comparisons between Derviş and Muhiddin existed even in the 1930s. In a 1936 collection on reflections of Ottoman writer Namık Kemal by famed Turkish intellectuals—Falih Rıfkı [Atay], Peyami Safa, and Nazım Hikmet, among them—Derviş was the only woman included. When introducing her, editor Kemal Tahir wrote, "I do not know much about women writers. When I used to think of women writers, to be frank, I would envision a veiled lady with one hand on her chin, another in the pages of the book. Alternatively I would think of Nezihe [Muhiddin] who is shouting from the top of her lungs about the degree to which women have progressed."[141] For Kemal Tahir, Derviş presented a third type, who encompassed the best elements of these two early modes of women writers.[142]

This comparison with Muhiddin created a false dichotomy about what was feminist and what was not. Just as there was a spectrum of women's movements, space existed for multiple viewpoints and beliefs within Turkish feminism. Behmoaras argues that because Derviş did not contribute articles to *Türk Kadın Yolu*, the official journal of the TKB, she was not political or interested in feminist activism. For the year of 1925, Derviş most likely was the anonymous author behind *İkdam*'s "Women's Pages," and Behmoaras writes that she emphasized the importance of women's "ornamentation, elegance, and beauty."[143] Instead, her signed literary record from the 1920s existed in the form of novels. Historian Fatmagül Berktay writes that

[140] One of her articles was "*Sind Männer erziehbar?*" ("Can men be educated?") in *UHU*'s July 1931 issue.
[141] "Kadın yazıcı denilince eskiden gözümün önüne - neden yalan söyleyim - bir eli çenesinde, diğeri kitabın yapraklarında yaşmaklı bir hanımefendi gelirdi. Yahut ta kadınlar birliği salonlarında Türk kadınının ne dereceye terakki ettiğine (!) dair gırtlak parlayan bayan Nezihe Muhittin." Kemal Tahir, *Namık Kemal için diyorlar ki*, 27.
[142] "Sonraları bu iki tipe bir üçüncü karıştı. Sokak kıyafetini her ayın acayip modasına uydurup gülünç olmayan gazeteci ve romancı kadın. Sabiha Sertel ve Suat Derviş." Ibid.
[143] "Hiçbirinde Suat Derviş'in adı geçmemekle birlikte, onun idaresinde çıkmış oldukları yerleşmiş bir kanıdır. Heyecanlı röportajlara, çarpıcı haberlere imza atan hızlı gazeteci Suat, kadınlar için süslenmenin, zarif ve güzel olmanın önemini birçok kez vurgulamıştı." Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 77.

Derviş's early novels were concerned with women's psychology and represented people on the margins; she was "a distinctively 'urban' writer concerned with processes of individualization—a theme which ran quite contrary to the period's dominant solidarist/corporatist ideology."[144] Like Mussolini and the Fascists, Mustafa Kemal and the Kemalist regime sought the subordination of the individual to the national collective.

In 1930, Derviş formally entered the public political sphere. After traveling between Turkey and other parts of Europe throughout the 1920s, Derviş returned to Istanbul in that year. There she joined the *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (SCF, Liberal Republican Party). The party, founded at the behest of Mustafa Kemal as a means to deflect criticism of his economic policies, existed for just 99 days. The party, headed by the dictator's close friend Ali Fethi [Okyar] and Ahmet Ağaoğlu, would provide a liberal economic alternative in the national assembly against Prime Minister İsmet İnönü's étatism.[145] Derviş supported the SCF because she believed their policies would alleviate poverty. In turn, the party listed her as a candidate for the November 1930 municipal elections alongside Muhiddin.[146] Although the SCF lost and was disbanded by the Kemalist regime, this experience had a profound impact on Derviş. Throughout the 1930s, she wrote many articles based on her interviews with poor widowed and working mothers, and orphaned or abandoned children. Historian Kathryn Libal writes that this reporting openly challenged the regime, as her stories faulted the regime for ignoring the most marginalized members of Turkish society, like those of her colleagues Zekeriya and Sabiha Sertel of the

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[144] Fatmagül Berktay, "Derviş, Suat (Saadet Baraner) (1905-1972)," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006),109.
[145] James Ryan, "The Republic of Others: Opponents of Kemalism in Turkey's Single Party Era, 1919-1950," (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2017), 67-8.
[146] Behmoaras, *Suat Derviş*, 91.

publications *Illustrated Monthly* (*Resimli Ay*, 1924-1931) and *Dawn* (*Tan*, 1936-1945).[147] In 1935, Derviş attended the International Woman Suffrage Alliance congress in Istanbul where she interviewed twelve well-known feminists for *Cumhuriyet*.[148] In these conversations, Derviş asked these acclaimed figures their views on myriad topics: women in the military, world peace, and how states should respond to public health risks associated with prostitution.[149] When speaking with Dutch feminist Rosa Manus, Derviş asked, "What is the greatest flaw of great men in our times?" When Manus paused in her response to this question, the Turkish journalist shifted topics, "Women are punished when they do not want to give birth to babies. Should women have the right to abortion?"[150] This interview illustrated the range of Derviş's concerns.

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[147] Kathryn Libal, "National Futures: The Child Question in Early Republican Turkey" (PhD Dissertation: University of Washington, 2001), 185. On Derviş's colleague Sabiha Sertel, see A. Holly Shissler, "'If You Ask Me': Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 2 (2007): 1-30.

[148] Rosa Manus was born in 1881 in Amsterdam and was an active member in the Dutch Association for Women's Suffrage. In 1926, she became the Vice President of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, and in 1935 she cofounded the International Archives for the Women's Movement (now the Atria Institute on gender equality and women's history in Amsterdam). Manus became the organizing secretary of *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix* in 1936 and in the same year received the royal honor of "Officer in the Order of Oranje Nassau," bestowed by Queen Wilhelmina. In 1941, the Gestapo arrested the Jewish Manus and she most likely died at Bernburg in 1942. See Myriam Everard and Francisca de Haan, eds., *Rosa Manus (1881-1942): The International Life and Legacy of a Jewish Dutch Feminist* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).
Emilie Gourd (1879-1946), a Swiss feminist, founded the newspaper *Le mouvement féministe* in 1912 and served as the president of the Swiss Women's Association from 1914-28. Gourd served on the board of the IWSA and was its corresponding secretary throughout the 1920s.
Katherine Bompas was also a member of the IWSA board and exchanged correspondence with Nezihe Muhiddin and the TKB in the mid-1920s.
Huda Sha'arawi (1879-47) founded the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923. She is famous for publicly removing her veil in the Cairo train station after returning from the 1922 IWSA Congress in Rome. Sha'arawi's life and politics are well documented within Middle Eastern history. See Huda Shaarai, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1986); Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Sania Sharawi Lanfranchi, *Casting off the Veil: The Life of Huda Shaarawi, Egypt's First Feminist* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

[149] Kathryn Libal, "From face veil to cloche hat: The backward Ottoman versus new Turkish woman in urban public discourse," in *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, modernism and the politics of dress*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (New York: Routledge, 2014), 52.

[150] Selin Çağatay translated Derviş's interview with Manus (published in *Cumhuriyet* on 9 April 1935) as Document 6 in Everard and de Haan, eds., *Rosa Manus (1881-1942)*, 389-94.

Though her reporting in the 1930s emphasized more explicit institutional concerns, ignoring the political content of her 1920s novels fails to acknowledge the development of her own political consciousness and articulation of her beliefs.

Within Turkish historiography, scholars emphasize Derviş's involvement in the Turkish Communist Party and describe her activism within this group as her primary (read only) connection to politics. Behmoaras's biography primarily highlights Derviş's mid-1930s activities onward.[151] Examining her writing from the 1920s allows scholars to see the developments that presage her political activism in the 1930s. Within novels *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*, 1923), *Fatma's Sin* (*Fatma'nın Günahı*, 1924), and *Like Gönül* (*Gönül gibi*, 1928), Derviş constructed women characters with fashionable aesthetics but focused her attention on their emotional and psychological struggles that paralleled social challenges for Turkish women under the Kemalist regime.

Conclusion

As Italian literary scholar Robin Pickering-Iazzi notes, "Ironically, the repression of women's literary voices of the twenties and thirties was accomplished not by the Fascists, but by the sexual politics shaping postwar literary debates in liberal democratic Italy."[152] As Joanna Russ described the ways in which canons marginalize women writers, novels by Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin present historians with new creative

[151] Derviş's lifelong friend was Nazim Hikmet, Communist poet, and she was linked to the Sertels, a husband-wife duo who published the leftist *Tan* journal, in the 1930s and 1940s. Derviş traveled to the Soviet Union multiple times in the 1930s, and these trips led to the publication of *Niçin Sovyetler Birliği'nin Dostuyum?* (*Why am I a friend of the Soviet Union?*). Berktay, "Derviş, Suat," 110.
[152] Pickering-Iazzi, *Unspeakable Women*, xiii.

sources to recuperate and analyze women's experiences of interwar Mediterranean gender politics. Though scholars in both geographic fields tend to categorize these women within the binary of authors or activists, this chapter demonstrates that Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin all expressed feminist viewpoints, with suffrage not being the only marker of feminism. Being a card-carrying member of an organization is not the only metric to assess political commitments. By exploring the nature of their writing careers and political affiliations (before and during the 1920s), their novels reflected a world informed by national politics and represented a personal articulation of making sense of these authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 3 Bad Romance

Despite sharing political affinities and generally cooperative relations from the 1920s through the mid-1930s, Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey are rarely studied together to explore trends of post-First World War dictatorial regimes. Examining their historical and political parallels of masculinity and gender relations provides an emotional and experiential history of authoritarianism in these two interwar Mediterranean states. The novels of Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Suat Derviş, Maria Messina, and Nezihe Muhiddin challenged state-promoted masculinity, a key feature of both regimes, which encompassed a range of attitudes and actions toward women from verbal degradation to sexual violence, and revealed the negative emotional impact such actions had on Italian and Turkish women.

The previous two chapters examined how the authors' personal lives and political engagement intersected with the political contexts in which they were writing. This chapter turns to their novels, studied as hidden transcripts—cultural documents of non-institutional politics—to evaluate the authors' critique of and resistance to Fascist and Kemalist gender politics. James C. Scott argues that if the designation of "political" only applies to institutions, then subordinate groups "essentially lack a political life or […] what political life they do have is restricted to those exceptional moments of popular explosion."[1] The emotional content of the studied novels was their hidden transcript. To borrow a phrase from Second-wave feminism, for these authors, the personal was political: to feel and *write* emotions as women was a political statement under these authoritarian regimes in the interwar Mediterranean. In this chapter, exploring the themes

[1] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 199.

of romance, love, and heartbreak shows how the studied authors navigated the continued marginalization of Italian and Turkish women during the 1920s and early 1930s.

What is Love? – The Novel, Authors, and Readers

> The emergence of love marriage, in the sense we know it, was a radical intrusion by the individual into the hegemony of family groups in society. This was true in European history as well as elsewhere in the world. […] The introduction of the idea that a man and a woman should unite in matrimony of their own volition and only if they were in love caused great intellectual and *emotional* turmoil.[2]

To understand romance and heartbreak on the page, it is essential to recognize what love could mean to Italian and Turkish readers in the interwar. As sociologists Alan Duben and Cem Bahar noted in their ground-breaking *Istanbul Households*, the concept of marriage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drastically transformed when people started to believe that love was essential to establishing partnerships. In the nineteenth century, one of the most prominent fora for disseminating this notion was the novel. Pleasure-reading cultures emerged belatedly in both Italy and the Ottoman Empire in comparison to other western European states. In the historiography of Italian literature, 1825-7 marked the birth of the novel with Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed* (*I promessi sposi*). Literary scholar Ann Hallamore Caesar, however, convincingly argues for an earlier incorporation of the genre into Italian literary culture by pointing to earlier prose works and a vibrant translation market throughout the eighteenth century.[3]

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[2] Alan Duben and Cem Bahar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 87. Emphasis mine.
[3] Ann Hallamore Caesar, "History or pre-history? Recent revisions in the eighteenth-century novel in Italy," *Journal of Romance Studies* 1, no. 3 (2011): 134.

The novel had a delayed start in the Ottoman Empire, in terms of both printing and in creation by native Ottoman writers. Technologically, there were significant challenges in creating moveable type that worked for the Ottoman Arabo-Persian script. The printing press for Ottoman script texts only first arrived in the Ottoman Empire in 1727 when Sultan Ahmet III issued a *firman* granting İbrahim Müteferrika the privilege of running the first printing house. Orlin Sabev writes that the subsequent proliferation of Ottoman Turkish novels and plays in the late 1860s-70s marked the birth of an Ottoman reading public that wanted access to fiction.[4]

Before the creation of texts by authors from Italy and the Ottoman Empire, the books in the hands and on the shelves of readers were often translations of French and English texts. Scholarly articles in both historiographies consistently indicate that François Fénelon's 1699 *The Adventures of Télémaque* (*Les Aventures de Télémaque*) was one of the most popular texts; it was found in translation in Italy as early as 1702 and in the Ottoman Empire by 1861. Translation practices indicated the circuitous routes novels often took to reach their Italian and Ottoman Turkish forms. In Italy, English novels were translated vis-à-vis their French versions, a practice Caesar notes continued into the nineteenth century and frequently lacked philological respect for the original. Additionally, playwrights and novelists often "borrowed" their plots from these translations; Pietro Chiari wrote three plays based on Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, and Carlo Goldoni, the Venetian master of *la commedia dell'arte*, wrote multiple pieces about Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, considered one of the most popular novels of the era.[5]

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[4] Orlin Sabev (Orhan Salih), "Waiting for Godot: The Formation of Ottoman Print Culture), in *Historical Aspects of Printing and Publishing in Languages of the Middle East: Papers from the Third Symposium on the History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East, University of Leipzig, September 2008*, ed. Geoffrey Roper (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 115.

[5] Caesar, "History or pre-history?," 135.

"Imitations" were also common in the Ottoman Empire. Literary scholar Johann Strauss writes that Fatma Aliye, the first Ottoman woman novelist, enjoyed reading Ahmed Midhat's *Hasan the Seafarer* (*Hasan Mellâh*, 1874), a version of Alexander Dumas's *The Count of Monte Christo* (1845-6), but found the French original "too terrifying."[6] If Manzoni's *The Betrothed* was the first modern Italian novel (published 1825-7), then the first Ottoman novels followed not too long after with Vartan Pasha's *Akab's Story* (*Akabi Hikayesi*, published in 1851 in Armeno-Turkish[7]) and Şemsettin Sami's *Tal'at and Fitnat in Love* (*Taaşuk-u Tal'at ve Fitnat*, the first novel in Ottoman Turkish from 1872). These "first" texts featured titles with romantic notions—betrothal and love—themes that dominated early literature.

Many early Italian and Ottoman novels written by men prominently featured women protagonists. Arguably in the Italian context, this choice could be a result of the novel's intended audience. The eighteenth-century novel, Caesar argues, was "written for entertainment more than for education, for money more than for art, for women readers as much as, if not more than, for men."[8] Caesar's assertion hints at questions of content, literary quality, and leisure time. These stories, usually written as a pseudo-autobiographical first-person narrative, told of a female protagonist's series of implausible adventures in a fictional but realistic setting.[9] As a result, sharp criticism and objections to the novel emerged, with critics worried about the moral implications of such tales. Italian commentators argued that novels "blurred the distinction between what was real and what was not." Furthermore, novels threatened to plague the youth,

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[6] Johann Strauss, "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?," *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003): 51. He also notes that another imitation was *Un Çiko Montekristo* (*A Little Monte Cristo*) by Joseph Israel Herrera, potentially one of the first novels published in Judeo-Spanish (Salonika 1850). See Ibid., 62.
[7] Armeno-Turkish is the Turkish language written in the Armenian alphabet.
[8] Caesar, "History or pre-history?," 136.
[9] Ibid., 135.

"corrupting their morals."[10] Many authors, however, pushed back against these morality concerns to advocate for the utility and necessity of the literary form. While Manzoni accepted that "novels affected their readers *emotionally*," these works "could fulfill a socially useful moralizing and ideologizing function."[11] Ottoman intellectuals also engaged in this very same debate—was the novel for entertainment or didactic purposes? By the late nineteenth century, Ottoman novels prominently served as fora where many male authors used female characters to discuss issues of class, national sovereignty, and the woman question. Literary historian Robert Finn writes that the Ottoman novel of the 1880s belonged to "an urban, intellectual elite who wrote to a small and sympathetic audience," and this fiction addressed a readership which predominantly shared the same familiar perceptions of its creators.[12] These first novelists had many ideological commitments and formulated a new definition for what they considered to be a "worthwhile story." They believed that their fiction had to be realistic and morally relevant to contemporary society, and argued that "the utility of literature could not be divorced from its function as entertainment."[13]

In addition to providing moral insight and sociopolitical introspection, the novel also became a site of emotional exploration and education. Duben and Bahar effectively argue that because of their exposure first to French literature and then subsequent original Ottoman texts, elite Ottoman youth believed love was a necessary component for marriage.[14] Novels shared dramatic tales of forbidden romances, for example lovers rebelling against the demands of their

[10] Peter Brand and Lino Pertile, eds., "Manzoni and the Novel," in *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 430.
[11] Ibid., 431. Italics mine.
[12] Robert Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel 1872-1900* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1984), 6.
[13] Ahmed Ö. Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983), 38.
[14] Duben and Bahar, *Istanbul Households*, 88-91.

families or committing suicide because they could not be with their beloveds. For Ottoman writers, love became a "discursive instrument to effect changes at the level of relations between humans."[15] While readers might not have emulated these fictional characters' actions in real life, they started to view their feelings as essential to individual romantic aspirations.

Serving the didactic purposes many early novelists charted for the genre, Grazia Deledda and Nezihe Muhiddin wove in scenes of fictional women reading about emotions to demonstrate how they came to understand their own conceptions of love and subjectivity. Important to note is that neither author depicted bourgeois women readers, ostensibly the initial targets of the first Italian and Ottoman novels. Still, novels provided a space for the reader to develop an emotional consciousness, whether she was wealthy Istanbulite woman engaged in philanthropy or a wife assisting on the family farm in Lombardy. Despite telling the press that she was not interested in politics, Deledda in *Annalena Bilsini* (1927) used the character of Gina, the titular matriarch's daughter-in-law, to explore both female readership and Fascist gender expectations.[16] Muhiddin's protagonist Zeynep was an enslaved Circassian girl in *My Self is Mine!* (*Benliğim Benimdir!*, 1929) living in a mansion (*konak*) on the eve of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution. In portraying non-bourgeois women characters interacting with novels—Gina Bilsini and Zeynep—Deledda and Muhiddin articulated that literature provided women readers, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, the opportunity to develop the skills and imagination connected to reading.

[15] Nükhet Sirman, "The postcolonial through the prism of love: Emotions and the constitution of the modern subject," in *Contemporary Theorizing in Psychology: Global Perspectives*, ed. Aydan Gülerce, et al (Concord, Ontario: Captus University Publications, 2005), 348.

[16] When interviewed in 1926, Deledda commented, "I have never dealt with nor do I deal with politics. Of course, fascism is the greatest political upheaval of these times. I am a very fervent admirer of Benito Mussolini." I would argue that Deledda did not really have any other choice but to say that she was not politically engaged, especially considering that she was being interviewed *Il regime fascista*. See Stanis Ruinas, "Grazia Deledda ci parla della sua vita," *Il regime fascista* (13 November 1926), 3.

In reading novels, characters recognized that marriage was not just about duty or economic obligations. In *Annalena Bilsini*, Gina followed the gender expectations promoted by the regime: she was married, had two sons, and tended the Bilsini home. However, this cursory glance obscures the depth of Gina's self and feelings. Wanting to escape her mother's domineering behavior, Gina married Osea Bilsini, thinking she would find love as depicted in novels she read. Reality, however, shattered her dreams, and she thought, "Since the first night, I was disillusioned, because love, as men intend it, is an ugly and dirty thing."[17] Life for Gina was that promoted by the Italian patriarchal imaginary, but she did not find joy in her responsibilities: "And then you need to work: every *damned* day make the men's beds, sweep, wash, sew […] cooking polenta every evening […] I *hate* these things."[18] The accumulation of her daily labors made Gina miserable. Her feelings were contra the regime's idealized perceptions of the happy housewife; rather than expressing moderate frustration or boredom, she intensely felt hatred. Responsible not just for her husband and two small children but also her mother-in-law, three brothers-in-law, and Annalena's uncle, Gina resented her status. Though Osea ironically encompassed all facets of the proper Fascist man as a provider and virile husband, she dreamed of finding another "who loves me truly for my soul and not for my body […] He will say to me, 'You are my treasure, my life, my beloved.'"[19] Deledda elicited sympathy for Gina because she was unfulfilled by her role as a housewife and by her marriage.

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[17] "Fin dalla prima notte sono stata disillusa, perché l'amore, come lo intendono gli uomini, è una gran brutta e sporca roba." Grazia Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini* (Milan: Fratelli Treves Editori, 1927), 55.
[18] "'E poi bisogna lavorare; tutti i santi giorni rifare i letti degli uomini, scopare, lavare, cucire: e quest'accidente di polenta tutte le sere, tutte le sere, tutte quante Dio ne ha create! Io odio queste cose.'" Ibid. Emphasis mine.
[19] "'Trovarne un altro! Un altro che mi amasse davvero per l'anima mia e non per il mio corpo […] Lui mi dice: 'sei il mio tesoro, sei la mia vita, la mia adorata.'" Ibid.

Neither the novelistic romantic conception of love nor the Fascist imaginary allowed Gina the opportunity to express her own understandings of and desire for love. To be a wife and mother was not enough without love as she wanted it. She had material support but emotionally lacked a deeper connection with her husband. She cooked dinner every night, and in exchange, her husband Osea bragged about his flirtations with other women right in front of her. Feeling trapped in her marriage, Gina learned through literature about the possibility of finding a beloved who loved her as an individual. After the first quarter of the novel, Deledda introduced Gina's brother-in-law, Pietro. While on leave from the military, Pietro returned home and sparks flew. Attracted to his sister-in-law, he noticed a novel lying around with worn pages and wondered, "maybe Gina had read and repeated to herself the words of love."[20] His curiosity about his sister-in-law's reading habits indicated several things. First, the interwar readership recognized romance as a common genre that a woman would read. Thus, Pietro focused on Gina, not even thinking of his mother (as an older widow, I argue he viewed Annalena as someone without having sexual desires) or brothers as the consumers of this romance. Secondly, unlike oral traditions, the novel allowed the reader to partake in the story as a private act. Certainly, individual novels and other stories could be and historically were read aloud in both societies, but Pietro indicated that Gina was reading and repeating the words of love to no one but *herself*. Because she was unfulfilled in her marriage, Deledda framed the untitled novel as an escape and place where Gina could experience love at the height of its idealized form.

Similarly in *My Self is Mine!* (*Benliğim Benimdir!*), Nezihe Muhiddin used her protagonist Zeynep's reading list to demonstrate where she learned about love and emotion.

[20] "Forse anche Gina aveva letto e ripetuto fra di sé le parole d'amore. […] Ed ecco che la fantasia di Pietro lo trasportava di là […] nel giardino voluttuoso degli amanti: l'uomo era lui, la donna era Gina." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 92-3.

Among the novels studied in this dissertation, Zeynep was an unusual main character because she harkened back to an earlier Ottoman novelistic tradition. Because this novel was not set in contemporary early Republican Turkey, Muhiddin used this enslaved thirteen-year-old Circassian girl to avoid censure while expressing her dissent. In the novel, Zeynep's parents sold her for three hundred liras. Unlike the other girls in her village who viewed slavery as their best chance for achieving upward social mobility, she strongly disagreed. The girls teased her, and she adamantly declared, "When I am sold, I will kill myself!"[21] While they laughed and called her a fool, Zeynep was determined. Furious with her mother and father, she vowed, "My decision was final; I would kill myself and only in this divine death would I possess myself and be reunited with my freedom!"[22] Zeynep was aware of her feelings and unafraid to express them. Not wanting to be a slave, she acted:

> I threw myself into the sea from the ship without feeling any sorrow. I had not lost my consciousness at all! Upon diving into the cold water, I threw back a laugh that celebrated my redemption […] the boundless waters tossed around my body as if it were driftwood and filled my shrinking lungs with air and life; I tried to sink my little head into the black water's depths with heroic bravery![23]

Despite her agency and willingness to accept death as freedom, sailors and deckhands fished her out from the sea. Once reaching Istanbul, Zeynep attempted suicide for the second (and final) time but was thwarted.[24] These first acts of defiance demonstrated that Zeynep would never be passive and would never accept the fate determined for her by others.

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[21] "'Satılacağım zaman kendimi öldürüm!'" Nezihe Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!* (Istanbul: Sudi Kitaphanesi, 1929), 6.
[22] "Bu ulvî ölümde benliğime sahip olacak ve hürriyetime kavuşacaktım!" Ibid.
[23] "Hiçbir teessür doymaksızın vapurdan kendimi denize attım!..Şuurumu hiç kaybetmemiştim!..Soğuk sulara dalınca helasımı tes'it eden bir kahkaha fırlattım […] Engin sular vücudumu bir çöp gibi dışarı fırlatıp büzülen ciğerlerime hava ve hayat doldurdukça ben küçük başımı bir kahraman cesaretiyle siyah suların dibine batırmağa çalışıyordum!" Ibid., 7.
[24] "Kuyunun başına geldim, epey bir zahmetle taşı yuvarlamağa muvaffak oldum, kapakta ağırdı, onu da devirdim, demir gibi soluk kanlılıkla kendimi karanlığa salıverirken." Ibid., 11.

Initially furious over her circumstances, Zeynep became more comfortable in her new home after receiving piano and reading lessons. After Zeynep met her owner Nusretullah Pasha's youngest son Ferruh, he loaned her several books, remarking that the entire household knew about her intellectual precociousness. One text was Namık Kemal's 1873 play *Poor Child* (*Zavallı Çocuk*); in this theatrical piece, protagonist Şefika was forced to marry a wealthy pasha—a foreshadowing for Zeynep—and ultimately committed suicide because she could not reunite with her true love.[25] Upon finishing the book and shedding "sweet, caring, and sincere tears," Zeynep remarked, "It was the first literary work that opened my young soul.[26] Her reading list also included texts by Ottoman authors, such as Abdülhak Hamid and Tevfik Fikret, and the translated French novel like *Paul and Virginie*.[27] Muhiddin hoped that the novel's audience, through Zeynep, would also undergo this same emotional consciousness-raising. With fictitious women contemporaneously struggling in their daily lives, readers could recognize themselves and learn *why* they felt certain ways. A woman picking up *Annalena Bilsini* perhaps related to Gina constantly rereading a romance novel, its pages worn from use, or like Zeynep, readers too

[25] Duben and Bahar provide the synopsis of the play in *Istanbul Households*, 92. It is important to note that many Ottoman subjects never saw plays performed live. Additionally, numerous plays were never performed. Instead they existed to be consumed/experienced as written texts.

[26] "Genç ruhumu ağlatan ilk edebi eserde bu olmuştu… ne tatlı, ne candan, ne samimi göz yaşlarıdı onlar! Ruhu yıkayan, cilandıran o temiz göz yaşlarıma hasret çekiyorum! [p]aslı ruhumun, onların birkaç katresine bile ne derin bir ihtiyacı var şimdi!" Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!*, 29.

[27] "Bu süretle, Namik Kemal'in, Abdülhak Hamid'in, Tevfik Fikret'in eserlerini okuyordum […] Pole Virjini […] okumağa çalışıyordum." Ibid., 34. Abdülhak Hamid [Tarhan] (1852-1937) was an Ottoman/Turkish playwright and poets from the early twentieth century. He is often credited as the founder of Modern Turkish dramatic poetry. In addition to his literary accomplishments, he worked as a diplomat for the Ottoman Foreign Service (first in Paris from 1876-9 and then he spent more than 25 years in London, beginning in 1886). After the establishment of the Republic, he was elected to Parliament as a deputy for Istanbul in 1928 and served in this position until his death. See Syed Tanvir Wasti, "The Indian Sojourn of Abdülhak Hâmid," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 4 (1998): 33-43, jstor.org/stable/4283968. Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915) was a poet and teacher at Robert College. He was an editor of *Servet-i Fünun* and helped found the newspaper *Tanin* in 1908. See Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), xv. *Paul et Virginie* was a 1788 novel by Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Set in Mauritius, it focused on childhood friends who fell in love and critiqued eighteenth-century social class divisions in French society.

would weep after reading a tragedy about separated lovers. Although readers first in Liberal Italy and the Ottoman Empire initially viewed love as a source of liberation in the abstract, it transformed into a real-life challenge and danger for women in Fascist and Kemalist societies.

Masculinity in Italy and Turkey

Before the First World War, both Italy and the Ottoman Empire shared legacies of perceived inferiority and loss. European powers infamously called the Empire "the sick man of Europe." Similarly, Italian leaders were self-conscious about the nation's "modest imperial stature at a time when male honor was staked on the outcome of imperialist exploits."[28] In the wake of the Italian defeat at Adowa by Abyssinia/Ethiopia in 1896, humiliation festered for decades, and Italy attempted to gain a colonial foothold by attacking Ottoman-controlled Tripolitania (Libya) in 1911.[29] While many Ottoman historians consider 1912 as the beginning of Ottoman mobilization prior to the First World War, 1911 is a more appropriate start. Even though Italy emerged victorious in Libya against the Ottomans, the psychology of humiliation prevailed. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, politicians made decisions with the goal of elevating Italy's geopolitical stature within the international community. Although against the war in Libya, Benito Mussolini was suspicious of neighboring European states. Around 1914, he argued that the nation was "menaced by the powerful Central European

[28] Victoria DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 25.
[29] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 167-8.

empires."[30] Similarly, the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suffered numerous defeats and sought to overcome its "sick man of Europe" status.

In addition to national self-doubt, continued violence after the First World War in both Italy and Turkey was driven by the societies' perspectives on men's honor. Anthropologist Ayşegül Altınay writes that "militarization and the nation-state share a strong relationship because nation-states have created and been created by wars."[31] There are many studies on hegemonic masculinity, which characterize Italy and Turkey well before the rise of the authoritarian regimes.[32] This chapter argues that Fascist and Kemalist state-promoted attitudes and behaviors must be examined as *toxic* to highlight the intensification of misogyny of the regimes' policy and attitudes and how they affected daily interactions and experiences. According to psychologist Terry Kupers, "toxic" describes behaviors and attitudes that "are socially destructive, such as misogyny, homophobia, greed, and violent domination" and includes dispositions toward "insensitivity to or lack of consideration of the experiences and feelings of others […] a dread of dependency…and the stigmatization and subjugation of women, gays, and men who exhibit feminine characteristics."[33] Whether *la vittoria mutilata*—Italy's psychology of defeat—or the destruction of the Ottoman Empire, feelings of insecurity bred the toxic masculinity that emerged and intensified after 1919. Misogyny, greed, violent domination, and the "dread of dependency" led to actors outside ruling institutions to seek

[30] Mussolini quoted in Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 84.
[31] Ayşegül Altınay, "Ordu-Millet-Kadınlar: Dünyanın İlk Kadın Savaş Pilotu: Sabiha Gökçen," in *Vatan Millet Kadınlar*, ed. Ayşegül Atınay (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 273.
[32] Fatih Keskin, "Masculinity in Gender Relations: Hegemonic Masculinity and Masculine Power Discourse in Turkey," *Public Integrity* 20 (2018): 96. See also numerous studies by R.W. Connell.
[33] Terry A. Kupers, "Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 6, no. 6 (2005): 715-6.

power.[34] These aspects were deeply ingrained within the politics and aesthetics of the Fascist and Kemalist states.

The rise of the authoritarian regimes did not ease anxieties over masculinity, but exacerbated them. In spite of the First World War ending on paper, violence continued in Italy and Turkey. According to historian Glenda Sluga, these new Fascists, "serving" in combat squads (*fasci di combattimento*), returned home and "identified with a war-based culture, not unlike that promoted in the past by Futurists or other purveyors of modernity."[35] Instead of demobilizing, many Italian veterans attacked socialists, other leftists, and striking rural workers. They also raged against the Liberal politicians who sent them to war.[36] Likewise, the Turkish War of Independence, fought by Mustafa Kemal's still mobilized nationalist forces, challenged both the impotent Ottoman government in Istanbul (acquiescing to Entente demands) and Greece's irredentist aspirations.

The experience of the First World War and subsequent periods of violence saw a tight linkage between nationalism and patriarchy. The fora, methods, and justifications for violence were not equal or the same, but it is worth considering that both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal rose to power with the personal and physical strength of predominantly homosocial support bases. As historian Robert O. Paxton affirms, "Without question fantasies of virility, violence, and domination played important roles in the emotional appeal of fascist movements and regimes."[37] In his examination of Fascism and masculinity, Sandro Bellassai writes, "When such

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[34] Kupers, "Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison," 714.
[35] The *Partito nazionale fascista*'s (PNF; National Fascist Party) precursor was the *fasci di combattimento* officially formed by Mussolini in 1919. Glenda Sluga, "The Aftermath of War," in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. R.J.B. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 73.
[36] Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 30. See also Michael R. Ebner, *Ordinary Violence in Mussolini's Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power: Fascism in Italy 1919-1929, Third Edition* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[37] Paxton, "Comparisons and Definitions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 556.

a normative image assumed violent traits, as happened with fascist masculinity, the supposed inferiority of women became doubly necessary […] the masculine ideal of a model of femininity marked by inferiority, obedience and absolute dedication to the family."[38] The men-first hierarchy was not new to Italian and Turkish societies. What was new included the ways in which the Fascists and Kemalists constructed, manipulated, and intensified gender rhetoric, with an extreme emphasis on difference.

In both Fascist and Kemalist Turkey, the states constructed their citizenship regimes through a series of binaries: "rural-urban, modern-non-modern," and particularly in the case of Turkey, "secular-non-secular."[39] Men-women is an overlooked but crucial binary of social and political practices and everyday life. In recent scholarship on Fascist Italy, historians have contrasted and analyzed masculinities through the lens of fatherhood or men as seducers.[40] The Fascists promoted a specific vision of masculinity that encompassed strength, virility, and self-confidence.[41] Beyond mere discourse, Mussolini's regime circulated a specific vision of the ideal Fascist man. Historian Lorenzo Benadusi writes that "propaganda tended to disseminate the image of an aggressive, authoritarian and martial masculinity."[42] Strength and virility were tied

[38] Sandro Bellassai, "The masculine mystique: antimodernism and virility in fascist Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10, no. 3 (2005): 326.
[39] Rasim Özgür Dönmez, "Coup d'états and the Masculine Turkish Political Sphere: Modernization without Strong Democratization," in *Gendered Identities: Criticizing Patriarchy in Turkey*, eds. Rasim Özgür Dönmez and Fazilet Ahu Özmen (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013), 11.
[40] See Barbara Spackmann, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); John Champagne, *Aesthetic Modernism and Masculinity in Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge, 2013); Martina Salvante, "'Less than a Boot-Rag': Procreation, Paternity, and the Masculine Ideal in Fascist Italy," in *Masculinities and the Nation in the Modern World: Between Hegemony and Marginalization*, eds. Pablo Dominguez Andersen and Simon Wendt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 93-112.
[41] Spackmann, *Fascist Virilities*, 2.
[42] Lorenzo Benadusi, "Private Life and Public Morals: Fascism and the 'Problem' of Homosexuality," trans. Ann Pichey and Alessandro Boccanelli, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5, no. 2 (2004): 174.

to demographic and eugenic concerns which in turn impacted by Italy's insecurity on the international geopolitical stage.

Unlike in the historiography of Fascist Italy, attention to masculinity is often missing within studies of the Kemalist Era.[43] There is agreement that the Turkish nationalism promoted by Mustafa Kemal and his elite (male) supporters was predicated upon security concerns: the state projected and reified the "gendered logic of the masculine protecting its female nation."[44] The Kemalist regime oriented itself towards Europe and sought to rapidly implement often radical reforms through its modernization project, whether banning the fez for the Panama hat or replacing sharia law with a version of the secular Swiss Civil Code in 1926. Despite granting some concessions to women, the new Turkish legal system still maintained male social and political primacy. Historian Ayşe Saraçgil notes that "the radical changes, realized by authoritarian yet generous fathers, did not affect the asymmetric structure of the relationship between the sexes."[45] Many scholars of the Turkish Republic, however, often overlook problematic gender politics, choosing instead to emphasize and praise what women gained during Kemalist rule. In 1924, the regime granted women the right to higher education and the freedom to choose their own professions; in 1926, polygamy was abolished and women earned the right to obtain civil divorces. By 1934, women gained universal suffrage, earlier than many of their European neighbors, and in 1936, women could be elected to Parliament (18 won seats).

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[43] Arus Yumul, "Fashioning the Turkish Body Politic," in *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Celia Kerslake, et al (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 349. See also Houchang Chelebi, "Dress Codes for Men in Turkey and Iran," in *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah*, eds. Touraj Atabaki and Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004): 209-37; Katja Jana, "Changing Heads and Hats: Nationalism and Modern Masculinities in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey*,"* in Andersen and Wendt, eds., *Masculinities and the Nation in the Modern World*, 217-242.
[44] Dönmez, "Coup d'états," 9.
[45] Ayşe Saraçgil, "I contesti storico-politici del protagonismo femminile turco," *LEA – Lingue e letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente*, 6 (2017): 729.

By law, Kemalist Turkey granted women more rights than Fascist Italy, and Mustafa Kemal consciously viewed women's suffrage as a means to distinguish his single-party state from Mussolini's Italy and Adolf Hitler's Germany.[46] Discussions of legislation and official discourse promoted by the regimes, however, does not comprehensively assess women's personal and political experiences in interwar Italy and Turkey.

Men and Shame-Contempt

In ethnographies of the Mediterranean produced in the 1950s-1960s, ethnographies of anthropologists found that, from east to west "a woman's status defines the status of all the men who are related to her […] these men share the consequences of what happens to her, and share the commitment to protect her virtue."[47] Historian Noémi Lévy-Aksu writes that honor enables scholars to understand social changes in the modern era. Within Fascist and Kemalist gender politics, honor-shame perpetuated the toxic masculinity that crucially allowed the intensified exclusion and marginalization of women in Fascist and Kemalist society.[48] By exploring shame, we can examine how political anxieties conditioned romantic interactions between men and women. Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Messina, and Muhiddin recognized how honor and shame's emotional and affective responses were embedded within the authoritarian project. The authors negotiated social relations by using fictional characters' emotions to highlight and critique toxic masculinity. These works resisted the Mediterranean concept of shame as a woman-specific

[46] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 321.
[47] Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honor, Shame and Access to Resources in Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology* 10, no. 1 (1971): 18.
[48] Noémi Lévy-Aksu, "Building Professional and Political Communities: The Value of Honor in the Self-Representation of Ottoman Police during the Second Constitutional Period, *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 18 (2014): 2.

affect and suggested that Italian and Turkish men's experience of it caused uncomfortable and cruel interactions for female interlocuters. They introduced male characters as seemingly sympathetic, worthy of affection and potential allies of the women in their lives, but their novels ultimately revealed the men's inner selves to be weak, manipulative, and, frequently, cruel and violent.

Within these novels, male characters responded to feelings of shame with contempt and verbal abuse. In Suat Derviş's 1923 novel, *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*), her third marriage prospect was Naci, the younger brother of an old school friend. In just one chapter, Derviş used this character to demonstrate the entire affective range of shame and contempt.[49] Since he was shy, Behire jokingly introduced Naci as her "fiancé" at social gatherings, trying to make him laugh.[50] Not amused, he stormed off. At a different party, he snipped, "Are we children […] are we adults? Why do you demean yourself to talk, to banter?"[51] In another scene, he reminded Behire of an evening where he saw her speaking to a pilot: "While you were talking, how you were acting like a coquette! I say seriously, Behire, since that day I have chilled towards you. Are you not a woman?"[52] Naci was embarrassed and wanted to shame her to relieve his feelings of shame. Unflappable, his criticism failed to provoke a reaction or apology from Behire.

Days after his outburst, Behire encountered Naci again while she was out on a walk with a young officer. Naci overheard the man paying her a compliment, "What beautiful eyes you

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[49] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 134.
[50] "'Naci pek mahcup olduğu için onu herkese 'Nişanlım' diye takdim ederek sıkmaktan pek zevk duyardım.'" Suat Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2016), 28.
[51] "'Biz çocuğuz […] Biz insan mıyız? Niçin konuşmaya, şakalaşmaya tenezzül ediyorsunuz?'" Ibid. 29.
[52] "'Konuşurken ne de kırıtıyordun! Ciddi söylüyorum Behire, o günden beri senden soğudum. Kadın değil misiniz?'" Ibid.

have!"[53] Pursing his lips, Naci spoke over Behire to the officer, pointing out her usage of cosmetics, "Do you suppose the beauty of Behire's eyes is natural? You are mistaken sir!"[54] Motivated by jealousy, Naci turned to contempt in his ploy to render Behire morally and physically less attractive to another man. As theorist Eve Sedgwick notes, contempt is "a powerful instrument of discrimination and segregation. By means of contempt, the other can be kept in his [or her] place."[55] Where theories of honor and shame suggest that Behire should and *must* apologize out of embarrassment, Derviş subverted these expectations. Behire faced Naci and said, "How can you speak so *shamelessly* about me? [...] What is it to you if I line my eyes with kohl?"[56] Behire did not have shame about her makeup or personal presentation, and she made it Naci's issue.

After Behire called out his contempt and hostility, Naci professed his love for her. "All the things I have done were repugnant […] I am jealous. I am not a child like you have said. I am a young man of nineteen."[57] While accepting some fault for his actions, Naci ultimately blamed Behire for calling him a child, implying it was her fault for causing his cruel behavior. Despite his declaration of love, Behire refused to forgive him. Derviş used this interaction to suggest that Turkish men openly expressed contempt for women who failed to live up to their expectations and threatened their comfort. By writing Behire as confident in her convictions and personal and

[53] "Aksi tesadüf olacak, tam bu aralık genç zabit bana bir kompliman yapmak için 'Ne güzel gözleriniz var!' diyordu." Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 29.
[54] "'Behire'nin gözlerinin güzelliğini tabii mi zannediyorsunuz? Yanılıyorsunuz beyefendi!'" Ibid., 29-30.
[55] Sedgwick and Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters*, 158.
[56] "'Aklını mı kaybettin? Ne oluyorsun? Nasıl utanmadan benim aleyhimde bulunuyorsun? Ayıp değil mi? Ablanın bu kadar iyi arkadaşıyım. Gözüme tükürükle sürme sürüyorsam sana ne?'" Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 31. Emphasis mine.
[57] "'Bütün yaptığım şeyler çirkin, çirkin. Hakkın var…Fakat bilirsin ya Behire, anlıyorsun ya […] Kıskanıyorum! Ben senin söylediğin gibi bir çocuk değilim. Tam on dokuz yaşında bir gencim. Ne yapayım Behire, o kadar güzelsin ki…'" Ibid., 32.

physical autonomy, Derviş presented a powerful model for how women did not have to be ashamed if a man mocked (or attacked) their choices, appearance, or behavior.

Like Naci, other potential romantic partners in these novels expressed verbal contempt in their interactions with female characters throughout the 1920s. While these depictions were fictional, these attitudes seemed designed to keep women in a position of weakness, thus reinforcing men's sociopolitical dominance. In her 1928 novel *Love denied* (*L'amore negato*), Maria Messina presented the story of a ruthlessly successful milliner, Severa, who was viewed as an anomaly by her family and community because of her ambition. Using a historical setting (late nineteenth-century Italy) to assist with the hidden transcript, Messina's documentation of her protagonist's confidence and abilities further demonstrated Severa's deviation from societal expectations for women. Severa employed a young male accountant named Marco Aldini, primarily because she was attracted to him. She offered him dinner and conversation after work, which ostensibly was her manner of flirtation, and because he accepted her invitations, she believed he felt similarly. After learning Aldini loved a girl in town, Severa confronted him, calling him, "Traitor!" Completely confused, he responded, "I have done nothing to merit scolding! [...] You have been good to me, and I am grateful to you."[58] Severa continued to berate him: "You read inside my soul, you profited from my weakness and pretend not to understand! Was it not love that threw us into each other's arms?"[59] Hurt, Severa acted in the emotional manner patriarchal Italian society would expect. When Aldini finally comprehended the situation, his first reaction was to laugh.[60] His rejection through laughter, diminishing her to

[58] "'Io non ho fatto niente che meriti rimproveri! [...] Lei è stata buona verso di me, e io le sono grato!'" Maria Messina, *L'amore negato* (Milan: Casa editrice Ceschina, 1928), 136.
[59] "'Tu mi leggevi dentro l'anima, ti profittavi della mia debolezza, e fingevi di non capire! [...] Non era amore questo che ci buttava l'uno nelle braccia dell'altro?'" Ibid.
[60] "Ora gli veniva da ridere, pensando che la modista si era innamorata di lui." Ibid., 138.

being "silly" or "not serious," was an easy and cruel way to dismiss her—an independent, strong, and capable woman—and enabled Aldini to reaffirm his own masculinity and status. Because he felt emasculated by being her employee, his ability to reject her romantic overtures shifted the power dynamic, with Severa ultimately being emotionally hurt.

Published five years after *Behire's Suitors*, Suat Derviş's 1928 novel *Like Gönül* (*Gönül gibi*) depicted the protagonist Süheyla developing feelings for a man named Midhat. Süheyla encountered him at numerous parties where he discussed contemporary social issues and offered frank opinions irrespective of his audience. She overheard him telling another young woman, "You, women of our time […] lose a lot from your position, your influence upon us by approaching us […], by mingling amongst us."[61] Unlike Naci, who criticized Behire's kohl-lined eyes and outgoing personality in 1923, Midhat couched his concerns about women's appearance and social inclusion in the abstract by explaining that men found women more alluring and interesting when remaining at home, or wearing veils that limited the male gaze as in an earlier era.[62] Through her characters Naci and Midhat, Derviş demonstrated that men held women responsible for their reactions to them.

Midhat's misogynistic views were not the invention of fiction. Male anxieties over "modern" women who actively inserted themselves into public life, both physically and intellectually, frequently appeared in the press. Just two years prior to *Like Gönül*'s publication, writer Feridun Necdet wrote in the popular magazine *Lovely Moon* (*Sevimli Ay*),

> These days women have become alienated from many of their responsibilities. They neither want to look after their children, nor do anything else! […] You may

[61] "'Sizler, zamanımızın kadınları, diyor. Bizim aramıza karışarak, bize bu kadar yaklaşarak, üzerimizdeki nüfuzunuzdan, büyünüzden çok kaybettiniz.'" Suat Derviş, *Gönül gibi* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2015), 37.
[62] "'Bizi, çarşaflarınızla örtünmüş, peçelerinizle saklanmış, kafeslerinizin arkasında iken, çok daha meşgul ediyor, büyülüyor, teshir ediyordunuz.'" Ibid.

> say that these are the behavior patterns of a minority of women, but let us not forget that the majority followings in the footsteps of the minority.[63]

Modern women were prone to "selfishness, unfaithfulness," and were negligent of domestic duties; ultimately, they "misunderstood modernity" and were not well-equipped to move from "seclusion into a free style of life."[64] For men like Feridun Necdet and the fictional Midhat, women's entering the public sphere was a detriment to Kemalist society. There was fear of women neglecting domestic duties and their potential to ignore dictates that reaffirmed the significance and necessary of women's domesticity.

In Aleramo's *The Whip* (*Il frustino*, 1932), another male character attempted to reaffirm his masculinity through contempt towards his female love interest. Caris di Rosia's paramour Mino Vergili constantly felt insecure because of his chronic medical condition. When discussing their relationship, Mino asked, "Why do you love me? I am doomed. Donato [Caris's previous lover] is strong, he knew how to conquer you."[65] He revealed his shame and self-contempt: since he was ill, Caris's affection did not make sense when she could be with a truly virile man. Caris ended her relationship with Donato, who unlike Mino embodied the apex of Fascist masculinity: he was a strong-bodied, dashing, and adventurous aviator. She loved Mino because she felt "necessary to him."[66] But Mino felt emasculated by Caris's love and "he wanted to be desired as a man, and he wanted to be certain that she, between his arms, no longer thought of anything, that she dissolved in enjoyment […] Caris did not truly abandon herself. Her spirit remained vigilant."[67] Mino defined his masculinity through sexual prowess, his ability to dominate Caris

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[63] Feridun Necdet, "'Bir erkek karısından neler bekler?'" quoted in Duben and Bahar, *Istanbul Households*, 197.
[64] Ibid.
[65] "'Perché m'ameresti? Sono un condannato. Donato è forte, ha saputo conquistarti.'" Sibilla Aleramo, *Il frustino* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1932), 68.
[66] "Ella era necessaria a lui." Ibid., 85.
[67] "Egli voleva essere desiderato come maschio, ed esser certo ch'ella fra le sue braccia non pensasse più a nulla, si dissolvesse nel godimento […] Caris non s'abbandonava realmente. Il suo spirito rimanere vigile." Ibid., 137.

physically; when she did not "dissolve" (have an orgasm), she undermined his conception of his own gender and sexuality.

Their relationship disintegrated when Caris reminded Mino of his frailty: she "instinctively murmured, 'Poor thing,' with all of her love, with all of her heart's blood […] He heard, lifted his eyelids, and without moving, said, sourly, icily: 'I am not a poor thing. I do not want to be pitied.'"[68] Psychologist Kupers marks "dread of dependency" as a signifier of toxic masculinity. If women like Caris had power and demonstrated that they could thrive without male support, they threatened the entire Fascist project. As a stand-in for the state, Mino only reclaimed power by brutally rejecting Caris, because she bore witness to his weakness. He returned to a former lover, who desired him in the manner he wanted and needed in order to be a "man."

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, toxic masculinity as perpetuated by the regimes encompassed men lashing out against their perceived loss of power (echoing the states' anxieties over their international marginality) and maintaining destructive behaviors that perpetuated the authoritarian system. Since Italian and Turkish women were not allowed into the highest echelons of power and were criticized for public social and political engagement, they were unable to dictate or promote equality amongst the genders. With novels as a space for dissent, these authors crafted recognizable fictional encounters to condemn these behaviors and attitudes.

Establishing their gender hierarchy—centered upon toxic masculinity—became the regimes' prerogative within the emotional and political stakes of man-woman interactions in both public and private. In the Fascist context, gender and sex were not to be mixed and

[68] "'Povero,' mormorò istintivamente la donna, con tutto il suo amore, col sangue del suo cuore. Egli intese, risollevò le palpebre, e senza muoversi disse, aspro, gelido: 'Non sono *povero*. Non voglio essere compianto.'" Aleramo, *Il frustino*, 139-40.

matched: virility was the property of man, and femininity (and the implication that women be devoid of sexuality) of woman.[69] After just four years in power and following the transition to the dictatorship following the Matteotti Crisis of 1924, the Fascist government passed a "celibacy tax" in December 1926. Unmarried men, with the exception of Catholic priests and soldiers, had to pay a steep fee and faced discrimination in receiving benefits and civil service jobs if they were unmarried.[70] Setting *Annalena Bilsini* in Fascist Italy, Deledda used the fictional Bilsini brothers to reflect the life avenues possible for many Italian men.[71] Gina's husband Osea worked on the family farm alongside Giovanni, Baldo, and Bardo, with Pietro away in the army. These characters' marital statuses varied, but Deledda had them conform to the demands of the state. After all, if Italian men did not channel their sexual energies and activities into fecundity, the nation was at risk. Osea Bilsini was a productive paragon, already the father of two young sons. Still, historian Victoria DeGrazia writes, "The rank and file knew just enough about the Duce's peccadillos to admire his manliness."[72] Though married, he openly flirted with other women and bragged about these interactions in front of his wife. Deledda consciously used his roving eye to show that Osea emulated Mussolini's behaviors during the *Ventennio*. Osea's brothers anticipated following in his footsteps. Baldo aspired to get married, while Pietro received the soldier's exemption; the expectation that he would marry after his service remained. Unlike his brothers, Bardo dreamed of joining the priesthood. With the

[69] Spackmann, *Fascist Virilities*, 17.
[70] Lauren E. Forcucci, "Battle for Births: The Fascist Pronatalist Campaign in Italy 1925 to 1938," *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 10, no. 1 (2010): 5. This male celibacy tax, part of royal decree n. 2131, passed on 19 December 1926, at the same time Deledda was writing *Annalena Bilsini*.
[71] Someone mocks one of the Bilsini brothers' oratory skill and says that he is as good a speaker as Mussolini. This is the novel's only explicit mention of its explicit historical political context.
[72] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 43.

exception of Bardo whom the family teased for his clerical aspirations, the other Bilsini men did not overtly resist the boundaries of state-mandated masculinity.

Similarly, the Kemalist government implemented bachelor taxes to support their pronatalist agenda. In 1929, the article "Marriage or Bachelorhood?" appeared in the parenting magazine and *de facto* state publication *Robust Turkish Child* (*Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu*), perhaps an odd location for such an article when one would presume the readership primarily encompassed doctors, mothers, or married couples with children. Author Server Rıfat presented a morality tale about avoiding productive virility through the story of childhood friends Sabri and Nami. They attended the same school, entered the same profession, and shared the same opinions on everything—except for marriage. Server Rıfat described Sabri as finding tremendous joy and fulfillment in his role as a husband and father, whereas Nami enjoyed carousing with women and drinking alcohol. Their story ended with Nami becoming ill and realizing his friend was right about marriage and the family. Tragically, the author wrote that it was too late for Nami to redeem himself. This story acknowledged that women were essential in helping men achieve their prescribed proper masculinity by being moral and good wives and mothers. While bachelorhood may have appeared liberating and enjoyable, the state wanted its citizens to know that the best and safest happiness was found in the stability of the family.[73] Though targeting men, Server Rıfat's message also applied to young women to indicate that marriage was essential to the social order. Then, as Turkish mothers, they would pass these messages onto their children.

In the studied novels, when male characters felt and expressed shame-contempt during interactions with their love interests, they responded by subjugating women. When women

[73] Server Rıfat, "Evlilik mi, bekarlık mı?," *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu* 31 (April 1929), 13-14.

protagonists exhibited confidence, authors Aleramo, Derviş and Messina indicated that Italian and Turkish men would belittle or express cruelty in order to preserve their masculinity and its privileges. With formal institutional politics not available to Italian and Turkish women and often facing criticism for public social and political engagement, they were unable to dictate or promote equality amongst the genders. With novels as a space for critique, these authors crafted recognizable fictional encounters to condemn these behaviors and attitudes.

Sexual Violence

In addition to depicting male characters who expressed verbal contempt towards women, Suat Derviş, Grazia Deledda, and Nezihe Muhiddin revealed how toxic masculinity could intensify to include sexual violence. Throughout the 1920s, neither Italy nor Turkey allowed women to participate in national politics, and the suppression of opposition groups became the *modus operandi*—well into the 1930s.[74] Derviş, Deledda, and Muhiddin used these fictional narratives to raise awareness about women's political and social marginalization. When read through the hidden transcript, the authors were most explicit and emphatic about struggles women faced under their respective regimes when depicting scenes of sexual violence. They implied that men, and therefore the ruling powers, neither cared about nor believed in a woman's right to bodily autonomy and safety.

Derviş's *Behire's Suitors*—published in the same year as the establishment of the Turkish Republic—emphasized the desire for women's personal and political autonomy. Despite barely

[74] After granting Turkish women universal suffrage, the government forced the TKB to shut down as it was deemed unnecessary for women to need such a group. Margery Corbett Ashby Interview, 21 September, 1976, 8SUF/B/106, Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragists Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews, Women's Library at the London School of Economics. Interview took place at the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square, London.

allowing Behire to speak, her fourth suitor Necmettin Bey vowed "her entire voice will be hers."[75] Behire admitted that she admired his intellect and extensive vocabulary but found it difficult to find "smart" words for her own response. The only ones she could think of were from the newspaper: *hürriyet-i ebediye* (eternal freedom), *istiklal* (independence), and *Mülkiye-yi Şahane teblig-i resmi* (official communications of the Imperial Civil Service).[76] This array of words suggests two key facts about gender and society during the transition from empire to republic. First, young women like Behire were reading the news and engaged with political discourse. Second, drawing from a common motif in Ottoman novels, Necmettin Bey imagined himself as a hero—their marriage would be emancipatory for Behire, breaking the shackles of the traditional family. Yet by explicitly signaling politically and emotionally charged words like "freedom" and "independence," Derviş demonstrated that Behire thought of these values autonomously, without mediation or requiring male intervention. Furthermore, the idea of women being free and independent challenged authoritarian ideals.

However, Derviş revealed the suitor's overtures as ultimately illusory and insincere. When Necmettin Bey proposed, Behire refused. He responded that she did not understand what she was saying, and, taking her by surprise, he embraced her. Behire did not consent to his touch, so she screamed "fire!" to get other people to rush into the room; Necmettin Bey fled. When Behire's family found her and expressed confusion, Behire, in a state of shock, repeated more politically-symbolic terms from the newspapers: *Asakir-i Osmaniye* (Ottoman troops), *Misak-ı*

[75] "'Zevcem oluna bütün hakk-ı kelam sizin olacak. Hatta şimdiden söyleyiniz, bekliyorum.'" Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 39.
[76] "'Konuşmak için söz bulamıyordum […] edebi bir kitap gibi konuşmak istiyordum. Halbuki lügatlere bir türlü ne aklım ne de dilim yetişebiliyordu. Necmettin Bey'i gayriihtiyari taklit etmek istedikçe dilimin ucuna her gün gazetelerde gözüme ilişen basmakalıp ve manasız hürriyet-i ebediye, istiklal, iktisadi, Divan-ı Umumiye, Mülkiye-yi Şahane teblig-i resmi […] gibi bir sürü sözler geliyordu.'" Ibid.

Milli (National Pact of 1920), and *zafer-i nihai* (ultimate victory).[77] While Necmettin Bey viewed his marriage proposal as emancipatory and heroic, his words and actions showed his hypocrisy as he attempted to strip Behire of her intellectual and bodily autonomy. The young woman's choice of words can be read on comical and metaphorical levels, and Derviş used them to articulate the hope that, in the new nation, women like Behire would be respected and that the state would recognize their autonomy.

In 1927's *Annalena Bilsini*, Deledda depicted an attempted sexual assault. The author presented Pietro, the titular protagonist's son, as the embodiment of the virile Fascist man—a young, strong, and handsome soldier. Upon meeting Pietro, Annalena's daughter-in-law, Gina—though already married—declared that Pietro was the ideal lover for whom she had been waiting. Her romantic interest allowed her to fantasize about being truly loved for her *self*, not for physical purposes. She found herself in the beginnings of "cruel optimism" as theorized by Lauren Berlant: Gina believed that this love was possible and could "expect that this time, nearness to this thing will help […[her]…] to become different in just the right way."[78] She thought that Pietro would love her in a better way than her husband, but it was an illusion based upon the premise of love as an emancipatory force. When Deledda switched the narration of this romance to Pietro's perspective, it became clear that Gina's optimism was misplaced. Pietro desired his sister-in-law, but this want materialized in the objectification of her as a prize to be won and taken (i.e. engage in sexual intercourse). Thinking of a story he shared with his relatives about a crocodile chasing a man in a jungle, he determined that Gina was his prey.

[77] "'Zihnimde birçok manasız sözler birbirini kovalıyordu. Mütemadiyen, Asakir-i Osmaniye, Misak-ı Milli, Tıbbiye-i Şahane, zafer-i nihai,' diye ağlıyordum." Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 40.
[78] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

In the late nineteenth century, Italian male verist writers frequently portrayed female characters corrupted by literature, theater, and music. They were "possessed," "sexually predatory and hysterical," and "sick." Male characters were rendered "increasingly helpless or hopeless and the relationship between the sexes becomes one of predator (female) and prey (male)."[79] During the *Ventennio*, Deledda challenged these tropes: in her fiction, women were the targets of sexual predation due to the Fascists' toxic masculinity. In 1929, Fascist legal thinker Giuseppe Maggiore wrote, "Fascism is male. It loves danger, dislikes gossip, *scorns courting* because of its natural tendency to roughness, strikes when necessary."[80] In describing their feelings, Gina described her ideal suitor as one who "loved" her (*amare*) whereas Pietro "desired" or "wanted" (*desiderare*). Gina was not "sexually predatory," but instead would fall victim to Pietro's embodiment of the regime's promoted toxic masculinity.

One day, after Pietro encountered Gina alone in the kitchen, Deledda's narration ominously set the tone of their meeting. She wrote, "If he had approached her with sweetness, telling her words of passion, those magic words she also read in the book of lovers and that she committed to memory..."[81] This counterfactual conditional indicated that Pietro would fail to live up to Gina's conception of idealized or novelistic love. Deledda tragically continued, "But he no longer remembered the words […] he remembered only how those two [characters] kissed and possessed one another, and he did not want to waste time in vain by chatting. He was also afraid of being surprised by his mother and brothers."[82] His fear showed that he knew his intentions

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[79] Katharine Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism, 1870-1910* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), 10.
[80] Giuseppe Maggiore quoted in Benadusi, "Private Life and Public Morals," 175. Emphasis mine.
[81] "S'egli si fosse avvicinato con dolcezza, dicendole parole di passione, quelle parole magiche lette pure da lei nel libro degli amanti e ch'ella sapeva a memoria." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 95.
[82] "Egli invece non ricordava più le parole di sole e di profumo che gli amanti gemevano nel giardino incantato: ricordava solo come quei due si baciavano e si possedevano, e non voleva perdere tempo in vane chiacchiere. Aveva paura, inoltre, di essere sorpreso dalla madre e dai fratelli." Ibid.

were reprehensible. While Pietro considered catching his prey, Deledda returned to Gina's perspective and wrote, "Gina, who did not dare look him in the face, was ashamed of her thoughts and her guilty desire. No, Pietro did not think of her; and she felt, although ashamed, deeply unhappy."[83] In a contemporary review of the novel, Goffredo Bellonci wrote that Gina "desired love and sin" but the shame "would have been consummated, if Gina had not understood the danger for herself or for everyone."[84] Bellonci misread her feelings towards love. Earlier in the novel, Gina described her "love" with her husband as "an ugly and dirty thing." Gina, a consumer of romance novels, viewed this kitchen meeting with Pietro as a "terrible danger."[85] The young woman wondered, "Yet, why did she go there? She did not know: something stronger than her will, her own sensual desire […] the illusion perhaps of finally hearing the mysterious voice of love."[86] Bellonci rendered "her sensual desire" as her "desire for sin," indicating that women's sexuality after marriage only existed for procreation. Thus the critic held Gina responsible—as a woman—for protecting her virtue and the stability of the household. The tragedy was that Gina craved proximity to love and would be harmed because of her feelings. Deledda recognized that Fascist culture made no such demands of Pietro to check his own desires, and would even encourage his sexual aggressiveness.

Leaning into Maggiore's rhetoric of Fascism's maleness, Pietro assaulted Gina. He "seized the woman […] threw her over the small bed, searched for her lips and stifled her cry

[83] "La sua voce era calma, anzi un po' assonnata: e Gina, che non osava guardarlo in viso, aveva vergogna dei suoi pensieri e del suo desiderio colpevole. No, Pietro non pensava a lei; e lei se ne sentiva, pure vergognandosene, profondamente infelice." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 96.
[84] Goffredo Bellonci, "Il nuovo romanzo di Grazia Deledda." *Il giornale d'Italia*, 29 October 1927, RIT 556, Fondo deledda, ISRE, Nuoro, Sardinia, Italy.
[85] "il pericolo terribile." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 97.
[86] "Eppure, perché ci andava? Ella non lo sapeva: qualche cosa di più forte della sua volontà, del suo stesso desiderio sensuale, come l'attrazione dell'abisso, la chiamava: l'illusione forse di ascoltare finalmente la voce misteriosa dell'amore." Ibid.

with a brutal kiss.[87] While reviewer Bellonci indicated that she was conscious of the danger in the abstract, he failed to charge Pietro with his crime. The critic interpreted Deledda's subsequent description of Gina "closing her eyes and slackening her body" as her wanting Pietro physically. But Deledda previously described Gina's ideal love as emotional, pure, and nonphysical, indicating that her affective responses were triggered by fear of assault. When Pietro finally loosened his grip, Gina neither pulled him back for a kiss nor leaned into his embrace. Instead she jumped up and *screamed*.[88] Later, Pietro blamed Gina for the events that transpired, thinking, "She too knows she is guilty. If she had not wanted me, she would not have come [to the kitchen]."[89]

Pietro's internal monologue reflected a wholesale acceptance of Fascist norms in which "custom as well as law presumed the woman to be a consenting party to her seduction, if not actually the instigator."[90] Bellonci described Pietro as "a lazy seducer," but Deledda was far more critical.[91] Before the kitchen encounter, Pietro consciously chose to seize Gina physically whether she granted consent or not. Later in the novel, when Pietro was accused of abducting the wealthy young Lia Giannini (who will be discussed in the next chapter), his mother Annalena remembered the kitchen incident, as she witnessed the aftermath of Gina jumping up from the bed. She thought, "The memory of Gina shaken, that winter day, after his bestial assault. Oh, if

[87] "Egli sollevò il viso, la guarda con gli occhi grandi neri che parevano davvero due abissi languidi dove la pupilla era naufragata e con essa la luce di Dio: prese la tazza e la depose sul tavolino […] poi balzò e afferrò la donna con la mossa selvaggia del coccodrillo, la rovesciò sul lettuccio, le cercò le labbra e soffocò con un bacio brutale il grido di lei […] [Gina] chiuse gli occhi, rallentò le mani, parve abbandonarsi." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 97-8.
[88] "Ma Pietro, già sicuro di poterla prendere, la lasciò un po' libera, ella balzò in piedi ed urlò." Ibid., 98. Emphasis mine.
[89] "'Sa che anche lei è colpevole. Se non mi avesse voluto non veniva qui.'" Ibid., 99.
[90] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 139.
[91] "…Pietro accidioso insidiatore di donne." Bellonci, "Nuovo romanzo."

he dared!"[92] Deledda could have abandoned this plot point, but by reinforcing its significance and having Annalena (another woman) define it as assault, she emphasized the toxicity of Pietro's actions.

Nezihe Muhiddin's *My Self is Mine!* (*Benliğim Benimdir!*) articulated rape as the culmination of toxic masculinity. Her protagonist was Zeynep, a precocious and bold thirteen-year-old Circassian slave girl, who desired her freedom.[93] After being sold to a wealthy household in Istanbul, she overheard other girls in the harem gossip that their owner Nusretullah Pasha yearned for "Little Zeynep." In the Ottoman Empire, female slaves—no matter their age—were the sexual property of their masters. Historian Madeline Zilfi writes that they "had no right of refusal or appeal with regard to their sexuality […] [Sexuality] was not [theirs] to lose, withhold, or contest."[94] Through Muhiddin's hidden transcript, she articulated that this mentality of denying women's women bodily autonomy had not completely changed within Republican society. Because the Kemalist regime failed on its promises of social and political equality, Muhiddin used the character of Zeynep to embed critiques of systems of oppression, whether historic slavery or contemporary marginalization based upon gender.

After months of infatuation, Nusretullah Pasha finally entered Zeynep's room and raped her. Rather than employ one of the commonly-used [Ottoman] Turkish verbs for "to rape" in this scene (*iğfal etmek*, *hetk-i perde-i ırz etmek*, or the colloquial *if'al babına çekmek*), Muhiddin used *gasıp etmek*, or "to seize by violence."[95] Despite not employing a term that explicitly meant

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[92] "Il ricordo di Gina sconvolta, quel giorno d'inverno, dopo l'assalto bestiale di lui. Oh s'egli osava!" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 234.
[93] The 1908 Young Turk Revolution deposed the autocratic sultan Abdülhamid II and sought to reinstate the Ottoman constitution. See M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[94] Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 205.
[95] See *Redhouse New Turkish-English Dictionary* (Istanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 1968).

"to rape," the scene clearly depicted Zeynep experiencing bodily trauma: "He robbed my virtue that I could not plead for with my ill, weak body. He seized me with violence. As my body, incapable of even making a noise or asking for help, was in *agony*, he satisfied his greedy beastlike pleasures."[96] As a woman, Zeynep was supposed to be the vessel of shame, but she refused to accept this emotional and affective baggage. Speaking directly to the reader, she declared, "After this horrible event, you think that I, now, became a broken and resentful youth so much so that I would end my life…no!"[97] Though the term "rape" was not used in the description of the scene, Zeynep named the crime aloud several pages later. When arguing with Nusretullah Pasha, she called him "rapist" (*ırz düşmanı*).[98] When analyzing *My Self is Mine!*, scholars highlight Muhiddin's criticism of the Ottoman slave system. Yet by using the Young Turk Revolution as the novel's denouement, Muhiddin obscured her criticism of the Kemalist regime. Recently in legal trouble and out of favor with the TKB, she condemned persistent gender inequality in Turkish society through her fiction. When Mustafa Kemal and the new regime declared a sharp break from the Ottoman sultans and CUP, Muhiddin consciously portrayed the continued mistreatment of women through themes still relevant in the early Turkish Republic. Muhiddin gave voice and agency to a girl who, at the time, would not have been considered a rape victim. Despite the purported break with the Ottoman past, Muhiddin called attention to how gender oppression remained embedded within Kemalist politics and society.

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[96] "Hasta, mecalsiz vücudumla müdafaa edemediğim ismetimi çalmış…gasp etmişti! Sesi, bir istimdada bile kadir olmayan vücudum can çekişirken bir behimimin haris hususunu tatmin etmişti!!" Nezihe Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!*, 41-2. Emphasis mine.

[97] "Bu müthiş vakalardan sonra, zannedersiniz ki, ben, artık, hayatla alâkamı kesecek kadar küskün ve münkesir bir gençlik geçirdim!...hayır!!" Ibid., 42.

[98] "'Irz düşmanı melun! Hangi namustan bahsediyorsun?!'" Ibid., 46.

Authors like Derviş, Deledda, and Muhiddin wrote about women's fear during moments of sexual violence to highlight Italian and Turkish women's inequality. In the context of honor and shame, it did not matter to Necmettin Bey or Pietro if Behire and Gina did not consent to being groped or kissed. In Kemalist Turkey, Behire's struggle in 1923 appeared at a moment when the regime could have encouraged and codified women's political equality. But by 1929, Zeynep's rape denounced the tragic failures of the regime to its women subjects. These fictional assaults mirrored reality: despite casting men as protectors of the family and the nation, the state prioritized men's physical and emotional desires. In both nations, the majority of legislation, especially after 1926, focused not on controlling male sexuality, but women's, whether establishing monetary awards for prolific births or criminalizing abortion. Toxic masculinity as promoted by the regimes emphasized that Italian and Turkish women were objects to be deployed by the state for its chosen purposes. Officially, their personal autonomy and subjectivity did not exist.

Heartbreak and Resilience

In June 1932, poet Maria Luisa d'Aquino wrote to her friend Sibilla Aleramo, "I started to read *The Whip*. I like it […] but it is a book that makes me feel bad […]. Maybe it is because I am in a period of exceptional sensitivities."[99] D'Aquino's reaction demonstrated that women readers could relate to fictional protagonists' struggles. In the seminal *How Fascism Ruled Women*, DeGrazia argued that intellectual women's "political powerlessness made them keenly sensitive to the exercise of female influence outside of the political system proper, for example,

[99] Maria Luisa d'Aquino to Sibilla Aleramo, 2 June 1932, Box 63, File 611.164, Fondo Aleramo Corrispondenza, Fondazione Gramsci, Rome.

through the thriving female reading public of the interwar years." Yet while some observers in the 1930s viewed women's writing as a political act, DeGrazia reads plots featuring "renunciations of love and happiness" or "self-denial" not as political acts but as "masochistic fantasies."[100] Women writing professionally challenged the limits of appropriate womanhood for both the Fascists and Kemalists, but novels featuring "sad heroines" (in DeGrazia's words) were not political. Yet fictional characters like Behire, Caris, Gina, Severa, and Süheyla tried to reconcile passion and duty, attempting to negotiate and make sense of the new Fascist and Kemalist expectations for women. Moments of heartbreak or self-denial of love gave characters the space to self-actualize and produced feminist responses to prevailing notions of gender. Under the authoritarian regimes, love was not enough to dismantle cultural and sociopolitical constraints. The novels by Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, and Messina demonstrate that heartbreak created opportunities for women to resist patriarchal dictates in deeply individualized terms.

In *Annalena Bilsini*, Gina descended into depression after Pietro's attempted assault. She "felt an almost agonizing listlessness; everything seemed useless, and some days, she wanted to die: her wound wouldn't heal."[101] Unbearably alone with her pain, Gina was unable to talk to anyone about the incident. After Pietro transferred his affections to her unmarried younger sister Isabella (discussed in the next chapter), Gina realized that she hated him "not so much for his brutal attempt as when he killed her dream of the ideal love, or rather, waiting for this."[102] The unhealed wound for Gina was rooted beyond the physical assault. Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed writes that "love is a demand for reciprocity, it also an emotion that lives with the failure of that

[100] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 254.
[101] Gina "sentiva una svogliatezza quasi angosciosa; tutto le pareva inutile, ed a giorni desiderava morire: la sua ferita non guariva." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini,* 104.
[102] "Il nuovo avvenimento aumentavano il suo male […] No; anzi ella odiava il cognato, non tanto per il suo tentativo brutale quando perché le aveva ucciso il sogno dell'amante ideale, o meglio l'attesa di questo." Ibid*.,* 105.

demand often through an intensification of its affect."[103] For months, her loss of the potential for true love remained inside of her, "dead and rotting," until Easter. As the reviewer Bellonci alluded to and Pietro frankly declared, Fascist society writ large blamed Gina for the attempted assault. Yet, during this holy season, a time of forgiveness and rebirth, she decided to forgive Pietro and above all, herself.[104] Ultimately, her heartbreak produced a resilience that granted Gina emotional autonomy and relief from shame.

Writing *Love denied* in the late 1920s, Messina, echoing her own life, indicated that choosing to remain unmarried and independent was radical and discouraged in Fascist society. After Marco Aldini's cruel rejection, Severa found herself as the victim of local gossip. While encountering town youth while hiking, they kept their distanced, because "The children had a certain fear of her; their mothers, if they were having a tantrum, would threaten to call "the crazy lady" who lived in Santa Maria."[105] Messina demonstrated that Severa was first ostracized for her independence, and now that she was visibly heartbroken, she was "mad." Because Messina wrote Severa as a non-maternal, non-domestic figure, her neighbors were unsympathetic and refused to think outside of patriarchal gender norms. Later, she visited her mother and sister for a final time, realizing that she does not belong within the traditional family. When her own mother pointed out Severa's strangeness ("You are always alone over there!"), Severa reaffirmed, "I do not need anyone."[106] Looking at Messina's early short stories and her pre-*Ventennio* novel *The House in the Shadows* (*La casa nel vicolo*, 1921), literary scholar Elise

[103] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 130.
[104] "Era il tempo del perdono per tutti […] Anche lei, Gina sentì di perdonare a Pietro, e soprattutto *a sé stessa*." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 111. Emphasis mine.
[105] "Essi [i bambini] avevano una certa paura da lei; le loro madri, se facevano le bizze, li minacciavano di chiama "la matta" che abitava a Santa Maria." Messina, *L'amore negato*, 160.
[106] "'Sei così sola, laggiù!' 'Io non ho bisogno di nessuno.'" Ibid., 174.

Magistro writes that the author focused on the collapse of close female relationships to emphasize the "debilitating effects of patriarchy on women."[107] However, this contempt for and fear of women like Severa intensified under the Fascist regime. Not only did Severa have to contend with a mother and sister who did not and *could not* understand her choices, the people around her *would not*. Literary scholar Lara Gochin concludes that Severa was monstrous and, in general, a horrible person; her name meaning "severe" was not unintentional. However, unlike Deledda's works from the 1920s, there is agreement that Messina did reflect on the contemporary sociopolitical situation.[108] Severa as a character deserved sympathy but suffered for living in a world already so intent on keeping women subservient to men. This desire to be independent, self-sufficient, and not beholden to others would always be at odds with the goals of the regime: for all citizens to submit to the collective and act in the best interests of the nation, not the individual.

Similarly in Sibilla Aleramo's *The Whip*, Caris felt deep despair and confusion after Mino abandoned her. A friend explained that because of Caris's forceful personality, Mino was "crippled, in a state of irreparable inferiority;" his "surviving male pride" could only be restored by returning to his former lover.[109] Still heartbroken, Caris considered suicide, but ultimately, she chose life because "All of my music is born of my passion as a woman. I cannot

[107] Elise Magistro, "Narrative Voice and the Regional Experience: Redefining Female Images in the Works of Maria Messina," in *Italian Women Writers from the Renaissance to the Present: Revising the Canon*, ed. Maria Ornella Marotti (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 123.
[108] Lara Shantal Gochin, "Shades of Ambiguity: Maria Messina's Writing during the Fascist Era," *Studi d'Italianistica nell'Africa Australe* 15, no. 1 (2002): 67.
[109] "Mino aveva agito con la rigorosa psicologia del malato […] di fronte a Caris, ancor più menomato, in stato d'inferiorità irrimediabile; Mino buttandosi infine nuovamente fra le braccia di Adele, dove trovava per lo meno la soddisfazione del suo superstite orgoglio di maschio." Aleramo, *Il frustino*, 190-1.

misrepresent myself."[110] Caris recognized the power of her emotions; to be a woman was to have resilience in the face of pain. Despite her heartbreak, Caris never doubted her abilities as a creator: "She will continue to passionately chase in love the unrealized ecstasy, the spiritual fusion that defeats the inexorable loneliness of every being in the universe."[111] Aleramo's conclusion was defiant. In face of romantic betrayal and failure, her protagonist did not abandon herself in order to adhere to the Fascist status quo. Not every Italian woman was a Caris di Rosia, but through the hidden transcript, Aleramo encouraged readers, especially women, to prioritize *themselves* as individuals above the demands of the regime.

In both of her novels from the 1920s, Derviş demonstrated that heartbreak—often involving renunciations of love and happiness—reflected women's discontent with interwar authoritarian gender politics. After six failed suitors in *Behire's Suitors*, her final admirer Celal seemed like he matched her ideal. While arranging the engagement, his mother said that, for the marriage to happen, Behire's father needed to give her son a job or a substantial amount of money. Shocked and furious, Behire stormed out of the room. Later, she told Celal, "I do not have 15,000 *lira* for myself, and in order to buy a husband, I do not even have fifteen *para*" and warned him to never cross her path again.[112] Behire did not give her parents the chance to offer financial support because she was disgusted by the thought of her love being reduced to a purely transactional affair. While she cared about her family's status, Behire grounded her refusal in *her*

[110] "'Perché non mi uccido? [...] Non ne ho consolazione, non cambio il mio stato. […] Però, se dico che nella mia sventura non posso tuttavia odiare la vita, uccidere la vita. […] Tutta la mia musica è nata dalla mia passione di donna. Non posso snaturarmi.'" Aleramo, *Il frustino*, 200-1.
[111] "Ella continuerà a vagare, come una delle sue musiche, musica ella stessa, aerea e pure umana, continuerà a inseguire appassionatamente nell'amore l'estasi irrealizzata, la fusione spirituale che vinca l'inesorabile solitudine d'ogni essere nell'universo." Ibid., 203.
[112] Think of *lira* as dollars and *para* as cents. "Kendim için on beş bin lira olmadığını ve bir koca satın almak için on beş paramın bile mevcut olmadığını yazarak bir daha karşıma çıkmamasını ihtar ettim." Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 48.

personal, individual honor and rejected the existing order. Derviş suggested that Turkey, on the precipice of becoming a new modern nation, could accept women living independently and unmarried.

By 1928's *Like Gönül*, however, Derviş demonstrated that the Kemalist regime's demands for conformity to traditional marriage could be too difficult to overcome for many Turkish women. After fleeing Istanbul for Berlin because she believed Midhat did not love her, Süheyla fell into a depressive state and thought, "I did not know the heart was this poisonous. My heart has killed me."[113] Through interspersed flashbacks vis-à-vis letters sent to her friend Behice in Istanbul, Süheyla finally explained the reason for her sudden departure. Despite spending hours talking with Midhat, she felt him grow distant and resolved to change her feelings. Süheyla wrote, "He did not like me because he was not a person who could appreciate the virtues I possessed, and he had not and could not understand me."[114] While on a walk, she contemplated her feelings: "I was as wretched as a young girl falling in love for the first time […] A woman at my age, a smart woman would not suffer for this agony."[115] Then, she spotted Midhat in the distance with another woman, noticing love in his eyes. Her shock at this scene manifested itself not in a numbness, but visceral pain. Derviş wrote, "All my flesh, my entire body was wracked with a physical pain, angry, and burning with a real fire."[116] Imagining scenes of Midhat with this other woman and berating herself for her jealousy, Süheyla decided to flee.

[113] "Kalbin bu kadar zehirli olduğu bilmezdim. Kalbim beni öldürdü." Derviş, *Gönül gibi*, 49.
[114] "Midhat sade ruhlu, atıl sinirli bir zavallı adamdı. Beni, anlayamadığı, anlayamayacağı ve bende mevcut olan meziyetleri takdir edebilecek bir insan olmadığı için beğenmemişti." Ibid., 84.
[115] "İlk defa seven küçük kız bir genç kız kadar zavallı idim [...] Zaten onu seven kalbimin, ilk defa seven küçük kız kalbinden farkı yoktu ki [...] Akıllı bir kadın, benim yaşında bir kadın, böyle bir hiç için ızdırap çekmezdi." Ibid., 85.
[116] "'Yemin ederim Behice, bütün etlerim, bütün vücudum, maddi bir acı ile kıvranıyor, kızgın ver hakiki bir ateşle yanıyordu.'" Ibid., 86.

Escaping Istanbul could be considered an act of weakness, and Süheyla sometimes viewed it this way. Ultimately, however, deciding to remove herself from the source of her pain—Midhat—that caused her pain and harm was an act of resilience. During her travels, Süheyla had time to contemplate, visit friends, and attempt to reorient her life. Shortly after her arrival in Berlin, Süheyla received a phone call from Istanbul where her friend reported, "Midhat is going to find you. […] He loves you. […] There is no doubt about it."[117] Though they reconnected, the pair again struggled to find emotional equilibrium. He exhibited jealousy when Süheyla left his side at gatherings, feeling neglected. Surprised by this admission, she choked down her thoughts, wondering if he ever considered how those nights in Istanbul where he ignored her tortured her.[118] It was unjust that Midhat demanded certain behaviors in light of his past actions. Shocking Süheyla, he asked her to marry him but made a terrible mistake,

> "Süheyla would you like to be my wife? Does this please you?"
> There is a sweet blow in my heart…I cannot find words to say. I listen with pleasure to the voice of my beloved who wants to belong to me with all of his life and his heart.
> […]
> "Süheyla, you accept, don't you?"
> I am silent. While my heart wants to tell him yes, my head prevents this response, burning with a pain that I did not forget, could not forget, and will never forget. He speaks about the happy life we will have together in a slow voice. "We will be so happy that Münevver…Ah…Süheyla..."[119]

Süheyla's thought process throughout the proposal demonstrated that she was not the same as when she left Istanbul. Instead of ignoring this slight, Süheyla chose to confront Midhat's

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[117] "'Seni bulmaya geliyor […] Ben o kadar memnunum […] Seni seviyor […] Buna hiç şüphe yok.'" Derviş, *Gönül gibi*, 139.
[118] "Ya birçok gecelerin benim için nasıl birer azap olduğunu sen hiç düşündün mü Midhat diye sormak istiyorum." Ibid., 172.
[119] "'Süheyla zevcem olmak ister misiniz? Buna razı mısınız?' Kalbimde tatlı bir vuruş var...Söylecek söz bulamıyorum. Bütün hayatı ve kalbiyle bana ait olmak isteyen sevgilinin sesini zevkle dinliyorum. Ben bu sesi ne çok seviyorum.... 'Süheyla kabul ediyorsunuz değil mi?'... Susuyorum....Kalbim ona evet demek isterken unutmayan, unutamayan, unutamayacak bir acı ile yanan basım buna mani oluyor. O yavaş bir sesle beraber geçecek mesut bir hayattan bahsediyor. 'Öyle mesut olacağız ki Münevver...Ay...Süheyla...'" Ibid.

mistake—calling her by the other woman's name—but he did not notice his slip-up. She was not overcome with sorrow, but rage.[120] At first furious and vowing revenge on Münevver, she finally decided that she hated Midhat instead, and told him that she would respond to his proposal upon returning to Istanbul. Worried that he frightened her, Süheyla replied, "No, never."[121]

Süheyla left him to go for a short walk before a dinner party in order to clear her head. While walking, she encountered Sabih Şakir, an old friend of her late husband. He confessed his desire to marry her and his knowledge that Midhat did too. Swearing to Süheyla that she would never be the only woman in Midhat's life, but he promised never to lie to her. At the dinner party, she decided to reject Midhat, thinking to herself: "Do you not understand that I do not want crumbs of your love, I want to be your everything."[122] Stunning all the partygoers, especially Midhat, she announced that she was engaged to Sabih Şakir. As she and her new fiancé left the party, Süheyla thought,

> I will not be his woman.
> I will always love him.
> But this love will not make me small.
> This love will not make me loathsome, ridiculous, despicable.
> In this struggle, I shattered my heart.
> I cautiously, jealously guard my dignity.
> No Midhat, I will not give it to your cruel, brutish hands.
> …
> Oh, everything is over.
> Maybe I won't endure the longing for these finished things, maybe I will die.
> But!
> But no one…no one, especially him…He will not know what killed me.
> And this will be my entire consolation, my entire victory, my entire happiness until my last breath.[123]

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[120] "'Mithat niçin...Niçin bu ismi söyledin? Niçin bana bu fenalığı yaptın?'" Derviş, *Gönül gibi*, 172.
[121] "'Hayır…Katiyen.'" Ibid., 173.
[122] "…hayır Midhat, hayır […] Senden aşk kırıntısı istemiyorum anlıyor musun, senin için her şey olmak istiyorum, Ibid., 186.
[123] I retained the original formatting.
"Onun kadını olmayacağım.
Onu her zaman seveceğim.
Fakat bu aşk beni küçültmeyecek.

Süheyla loved Midhat, but ultimately her dignity and self-esteem were worth more than her passion. Derviş's ending resisted prevalent national narratives and the intensified subordination of women by the Kemalist state. Though Derviş had her protagonist conform to societal expectations and get married, she protested these norms by rejecting love. Even if her heartbreak killed her, she refused to give Midhat the satisfaction of her pride. Süheyla chose her self-worth over the fiction of happiness through romance. As a result, renunciations of love imbued her novels with relevant contemporary, political meaning.

In the novels *Behire's Suitors*, *Annalena Bilsini*, *Love denied*, *The Whip*, and *Like Gönül*, heartbreak at the hands of male love interests prompted female characters to make decisions that challenged the regimes' gendered rhetoric. The authors indicated that heartbreak led to the creation of a feminist form of resilience. Though hurt by betrayals, Behire, Gina, Caris di Rosia, Severa, and Süheyla were determined to continue their lives, resolute in their search for purpose and fulfillment in their own terms. Authors like Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, and Messina demonstrated that women did not have to sacrifice or abandon their dignity and respect to the demands and pressures of the authoritarian regimes.

Bu aşk beni iğrenç, gülünç, zelil yapmayacak.
Bu mücadelede kalbım parçaladım.
Haysiyetimi kıskanç bir dikkatle muhafaza ediyorum.
Hayır Midhat, onu sizin zalim, canavar ellerinize vermeyeceğim.
…
Oh artık her şey bitti.
Belki ben bu biten şeylerin hasretine tahammül edemeyecek, belki öleceğim.
Fakat!
Fakat kimse...Kimse, bilhassa o...O, beni öldüren derdi bilmeyecek.
Ve işte bu şey son nefesime kadar benim bütün saadetim, bütün muzafferiyetim, bütün tesellim olacak."
Derviş, *Gönül gibi*, 189.

Conclusion

> Except for rare exceptions in women's novels, it is always the personal, autobiographical element, which more or less is ingeniously disguised. The woman in general, does not think, does not construct cerebrally, but feels, lives her novels, her stories […] which are direct expressions of visceral emotions.[124]

Writing for *The Fascist Regime* (*Il regime fascista*), a *de facto* state publication, Armando Tartarini critiqued Aleramo's *The Whip*, belittling her music composer-protagonist Caris, because she deviated from societal expectations as an independent and artistic free spirit. Tartarini asked, "Should we believe it? […] Probably this is one of the usual innocent literary fictions." Her profession, and seemingly Aleramo's, appeared to threaten Tartarini as he argued that women needed to confine themselves to certain pursuits:

> Nobody pretends that the woman has […] genius, and nobody makes a point of her inferiority; she has many other beautiful and great gifts, most of all, sacred motherhood; but when she imprudently advances the pretense of competing with men for active creative intelligence, then you cannot help but to remind her of the organs, the mental wings that she lacks to ascend to certain skies…[125]

Analysis of Caris and other Italian and Turkish fictional characters demonstrates that masculinity as promoted by the Fascist and Kemalist regimes harmed women. Tartarini argued that women novelists only "felt" their novels, critiquing their literature as not being constructed cerebrally. Instead, when reading these authors and their deliberate portrayals of toxic masculinity, romance, and heartbreak, it is clear that Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Messina, and Muhiddin recognized the intensification of traditional hierarchies and mechanisms of control by the regimes.

This chapter demonstrates that the interwar Fascist and Kemalist states relied upon the shared cultural paradigm of honor-shame to maintain power. Likewise, women's fiction

[124] Armando Tartarini, "La quarta dimensione dell'amore nel nuovo romanzo di Sibilla Aleramo," *Il regime fascista*, 16 September 1932, 3.
[125] Ibid.

emphasized shared resistance to toxic masculinity as perpetuated by the regimes. Drawing from Ayşe Parla's work, this paradigm was essential to the "national order of things."[126] Writing about emotions under the Fascist and Kemalist regimes reflected women's complicated experiences with authoritarian politics and their affective outcomes. While the authors did not feature fictional characters attending protests for suffrage or joining underground opposition groups, the hidden transcript of romance plots demonstrated the very real political dimensions of women's lives and interactions with men in the interwar Mediterranean. Romance and heartbreak—emotional themes that readers and scholars could and often did dismiss as frivolous subjects—produced a sense of feminist resilience. Despite official rhetoric purported by the Fascist and Kemalist regimes that framed women as being "emotional" or the "weaker sex," these analyzed novels demonstrated that their women characters were anything but weak: they shouldered emotional burdens and persisted in the face of authoritarian policies that threatened their desires and autonomy.

[126] Ayşe Parla, "The 'Honor' of the State: Virginity Examinations in Turkey," *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 75.

Chapter 4: Anxiety of Age

Post-First World War anxieties and aspirations for the regimes' perpetuation led the Fascists and Kemalists to emphasize age hierarchies alongside gender. Novels like Maria Messina's *A Flower that did not bloom* (*Un fiore che non fiorì*, 1923), Suat Derviş's *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*, 1923) and *Fatma's Sin* (*Fatma'nın Günahı*, 1924), Grazia Deledda's *Annalena Bilsini* (1927), and Nezihe Muhiddin's *Beauty Queen* (*Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 1935) cannot be read divorced from this context in their articulations and analysis of age. In this chapter, the ways in which the authors presented age and its relationship to emotion highlighted how the regimes constructed new forms of political identity and social consciousness that emphasized the primacy of youth over all other citizens. Central to these novels was their representation of how the rhetoric of chronological age created ambiguity and conflict amongst different generations of women. In these novels, age often produced distinct emotional outcomes—often negative—for women in the context of authoritarian politics.

Age implicitly and explicitly influenced women's identities, agency, and interactions with men, other women, and children in interwar Italy and Turkey. Authors Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin established a literary foundation for their readers to understand women characters: their motivations and the reader's expectations for what they would do. Readers could react emotionally to them and understand the world in which they exist as mirroring their historical realities. As a result, this interaction between the text and what the reader knew about the world (in this case, interwar Italy and Turkey) allows for the analysis of age and emotions under authoritarian conditions. Reading these authors through this lens, their novels served as critical commentary on age and its socially constructed outcomes, examining that these fictional scenarios often challenged and disrupted political realities.

Why Age?

In its inaugural issue in 2008, contributors to *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* drew inspiration from Joan Scott's ground-breaking 1986 essay on gender, arguing that age can be utilized as an equally useful category of analysis.[1] As historian Laura L. Lovett explained, age is "a universal, yet fluid category that illuminates the historical contingencies of agency and power."[2] Age as a concept is found in all societies and cultures, but the values and ideas ascribed to different cohorts depend upon the specific cultural and historical context. It is both a "chronological marker" and "subjective experience."[3] Similarly, historian of American childhood Steven Mintz writes, "Like gender, age is a cultural system. Age categories are not natural; rather they are imbued with cultural assumptions, meaning, and values."[4] He continues, "Age is always modified by class, ethnicity, nationality, and religion […] Age does not define individual identity in as encompassing a way as gender."[5] This chapter argues that for the studied authors, age, like gender, *did* define individual identity for women living under the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. It adds to scholarship in both national and transnational fields on age and its (dis)contents in the interwar Mediterranean. Historians acknowledge that age and generation rarely receive significant attention in discussions of gender construction. Historical and literary studies on age cohorts rarely integrate a broader analysis of age and instead silo women by generation.[6]

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[1] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-75.
[2] Laura L. Lovett, "Age: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 89.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Steven Mintz, "Reflections of Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 93.
[5] Ibid.
[6] See Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos, "Introduction," in *Girlhood: A Global History* (Brunswick, NJ; Rutgers University Press, 2010); Richard Ivan Jobs and David M. Pomfret, eds., *Transnational Histories of Youth in*

In the analyzed Italian and Turkish novels, characters were referred to young women as *kız*, *ragazza*, or *bambina*—expressions indicating their youth and not yet being *kadın* or *donna*. The term "girl" especially has significant resonance and implications for these works written in the 1920s and 1930s. Scholars in the "Modern Girl Around the World Research Group" have articulated that "girl signifies the contested status of young women, no longer children, and their unstable and sometimes subversive relationship to social norms relating to heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood."[7] Historian Liat Kozma writes, "Girlhood is a gendered social construction defined by adults. Girls are rarely left their own narratives in writing, and their stories are usually mediated through the perspectives of adults."[8] With the exception of Suat Derviş, the majority of authors were older than the young women they wrote and mediated their characters' experiences with attention to their own personal age cohorts and societal expectations. Similarly historians of global feminisms also view age as a thorny topic of analysis. In her study of women's movements in the 1920s and 1930s, Leila Rupp finds that middle-aged women dominated feminist discourse and activism. She charges scholars with exploring "age and feminism in different stages of mobilization in various times and places."[9] Italian and Turkish women during the interwar were not a monolithic entity and as the studied authors highlight, they possessed different degrees of feminist engagement or held various political

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the Twentieth Century (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Jeannette King, *Discourses of Ageing in Fiction and Feminism: The Invisible Woman* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Kathleen Woodward, ed., *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[7] Scholars in this research group are Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Y. Dong, and Tani E. Barlow. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, "The Modern Girl as Heuristic Device: Collaboration, Connective Comparison, Multidirectional Citation," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 9.

[8] Liat Kozma, "Girls, Labor, and Sex in Precolonial Egypt, 1850-1882), in *Girlhood: A Global History*, eds. Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos (Brunswick, NJ; Rutgers University Press, 2010), 344.

[9] Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 170.

views. The Fascist and Kemalist experience did not always produce the same measurable outcomes for women in different age cohorts.

More broadly, however, women's interactions with the regimes' gender expectations caused significant anxiety and tension in their identities and interpersonal relationships. Where younger women on the cusp of marriage should have felt positive about the next stage of life, they experienced ambivalence or resistance. Both the Fascists and Kemalists largely ignored older women (i.e. those beyond the maternal period), but they too faced generational conflicts and uncertainty about their desires and societal expectations. Because the regimes sought to subordinate the individual to the society, the studied novels expressed that women at all stages of life struggled with their agency and autonomy in the interwar period.

The Regimes and Generations

Seeking a break with the perceived past failures of Liberal Italy and the Ottoman Empire, both Benito Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal seized upon this interwar moment to manipulate and shape their nations' futures with extreme emphasis on newness and youth. According to historian Alessio Ponzio, the First World War "created the conditions that allowed the idea of generation to become an ideological weapon that could unite all young people under the same banner."[10] Once in power, the Fascists and Kemalists repeatedly emphasized the "newness" and futurity of their regimes. In denying the continuity from earlier ideologies and parties, the regimes felt they had blank slates to manipulate the populace in their own terms.

[10] Alessio Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), 22.

Mussolini heralded 1922 as "Year One" of the Fascist era (the *Ventennio*), and Mustafa Kemal's Turkey celebrated the yearly anniversary of the Republic's establishment, both practices marking a clear break from the past. During the War of Independence, the Grand National Assembly, fighting for Turkish sovereignty, issued the Law of Fundamental Organization in January 1921. In this declaration, political scientist Banu Turanoğlu writes, "Based on the principle of the people's national rule, a *young* dynamic government of the Grand National Assembly was established.[11] From its inception, the republic, even predating Mustafa Kemal's dictatorship, actively engaged and promoted this notion of young as central to its politics and identity. According to Yunus Nadi, the founder of the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (*Republic*), "A world is collapsing, while another one is rising. The declining world is the old Turkey along with its caliphate and sultanate, whereas the world rising in place of the former is the new Turkey, forcing everyone and every nation to submit to its new belief."[12]

Both regimes heavily focused on educating and indoctrinating young citizen-subjects to become whole-hearted supporters of their rule. Mussolini believed that the main responsibility of the Fascist state was to educate its citizens and give them a sense of purpose through required loyalty to the nation. In order to achieve this goal, through social engineering vis-à-vis the family, schools, and other institutions, youth were to be "courted, organized, entertained, and indoctrinated."[13] Both dictators recognized the malleability of youth, believing it would be hard to manipulate those citizen-subjects who knew life and a political system before the Fascists. Mussolini lacked faith in Italy's adult population, whom he believed were tainted by their

[11] Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 223. Emphasis mine.
[12] Yunus Nadi, "Hükümet ve Hilafet," *Anadolu'da Yeni Gün*, 21 November 1922, quoted in Ibid., 226.
[13] Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 4.

experiences in Liberal Italy and the First World War. Indoctrinating Italian youth as "Fascists" would allow them "to conquer the future by rooting themselves securely in the minds of the growing generation."[14] In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal did not express the same vehement distrust of Turkish adults but recognized that the best hopes for the nation were the youth. The "Republican" generation (*Cumhuriyet çocukları*)— small children and those born in the first decade of the Republic—were not in danger of holding loyalties to the Ottoman state, its cultural and political institutions, and symbols.[15] Following trends in Europe, the Kemalist state intensely monitored debates on youth, sports, and heath, particularly from Fascist Italy.[16] Although focusing on men, historian Ponzio effectively argues that in both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the regimes sought to captivate all youth, reshape their beliefs, deprive them of their freedom, and remove their individuality.[17] In her studies on child health and welfare in the early Republican era, historian Kathryn Libal writes that Italian influence on the Kemalist regime manifested itself strongly in Turkish pedagogy and physical education transformations.[18] Both states micro-managed social engineering in order to produce their desired outcomes for the new Fascist and Kemalist societies.

Unsurprisingly for authoritarian and dictatorial states, "youthfulness" and its attributes were modelled from the top down. Both Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal wanted to be viewed as "young." As a result, they maintained public images of good health and fitness and hid any signs of aging. For the Fascists (arguably also the Kemalists), Ponzio writes, "They put the accent on

[14] Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 5-7.
[15] Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey (1923-1945)* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 170.
[16] Ibid., 136.
[17] Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 4.
[18] Kathryn Libal, "National Futures: The Child Question in Early Republican Turkey" (PhD dissertation: University of Washington, 2001), 42, n. 10.

the spiritual values connected with youth, rather than on age."[19] Whether skiing shirtless (in the case of Mussolini) or dancing (Mustafa Kemal), these leaders presented themselves as the sources of emulation for male citizen-subjects through these public displays of strength, vitality, and masculinity. By ignoring the dictators' chronological age, all emphasis focused on perceptions of fitness and youth.

Although Mussolini and Mustafa Kemal elided their age, chronologically-determined cohorts were essential for demarcating women's position in Italian and Turkish societies. This chapter utilizes the following age designations by the Fascist state to roughly classify the analyzed characters. Within Fascist institutions, young girls moved from *piccole* to *giovani italiane* (young Italians) at the age of 14, and at 18, they became *giovani fasciste* (young Fascists). Finally, upon reaching 21, these young women joined the *fasci femminili* (Women's Fasci) as "adults."[20] Although the Kemalist regime did not have the same social organizations based upon chronological age, these categories of young women (ages 14-21) and adults (21 and up) paralleled similar generational divides in Turkey. This latter category, encompassing women in their prime child-bearing years to those in the post-menopausal stage, erased nuance in evaluating women's personal and societal contributions and expectations. As a result, in this chapter, I integrate and evaluate characters overlooked in studies of age and youth: unhappy teenagers, a miserable married twenty-something, and a middle-aged widow, among others. In exploring this tapestry of ages, the authors displayed that the experience of womanhood under the Fascist and Kemalist regimes was complex and revealed that women belonging to different generations faced different challenges.

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[19] Ponzio, *Shaping the New Man*, 179.
[20] Victoria DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 119. DeGrazia notes that the women's *fasci* started these age categories in 1925. Ibid., 158.

What Comes Next?

In the earliest days of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes, authors Suat Derviş and Maria Messina published works featuring characters who struggled with the contradictory expectations that the regimes promoted to women. As early as June 1919, Mussolini and his supporters called for all women over the age of 21 to receive full voting rights; thus early female proponents of Fascism viewed the movement as "modern and liberatory."[21] Similarly, prior to the establishment of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal and the nationalist movement declared that Turkish women, by virtue of their bravery in the fight for independence, deserved a new role in society: "Today they should be free, enjoy education and occupy a position equal to that of men; they are entitled to it."[22] Later, he announced, "Our enemies claim that Turkey cannot be considered a civilized nation, because she consists of two separate parts: men and women."[23] In 1923, both Messina and Derviş published novels where fictional women navigated the new social realities of Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey. Where Derviş was optimistic that the new Republic offered great opportunities for young women self-realization and public engagement, Messina warned that the regime would demand women's conformity to traditional practices of domesticity.

Derviş's novel *Behire's Suitors* (*Behire'nin Talipleri*, 1923) explored the titular character's saga of evaluating her numerous marriage prospects spanning the years just prior to and immediately after the First World War. Behire's ideal husband was "smart, educated,

[21] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 30-1.
[22] Atatürk quoted in Nermin Abadan-Unat, "The Modernization of Turkish Women," Middle East Journal 32, no. 3 (1978): 293.
[23] Ibid.

handsome, and rich […] He will know French as well as a Frenchman."[24] Yet after providing her long list of desired traits, Behire matter-of-factly announced that if she could not find a man who fit her ideal, she would not marry at all. After her friend Sabiha warned her against waiting too long to find the right man, Behire retorted, annoyed, "So you either stay at home or go to *yengenin evi*." Bewildered, Sabiha asked, "*Yengenin evi*?"[25] *Yenge* is difficult to directly translate. It can literally mean an aunt or the wife of one's uncle, but can also refer to a generic "older woman." Derviş's implication in the novel is that it was the home of Behire's relative. It is important to understand the emotional stakes of this conversation. While Behire and Sabiha were friends, they held fundamentally different orientations towards social expectations. That Behire would forego marriage entirely in the event she could not find her ideal husband points to Derviş' articulation that Turkish women were entitled to autonomy in all its forms: political, social, and personal. If marriage failed to emancipate her or meet her expectations, then she would go it alone. Behire provided Sabiha with a brief history of the *yengenin evi*, "My aunt's house is the residence of *old girls* (*ihtiyar kızlar*) who could not get married, women who were thrown out by their husbands."[26] After this explanation, Sabiha looked at her friend and noticed, "She was saying this with an excitement reddening her cheeks up to below her eyes and to her temples and ears."[27] Instead of being flushed with shame or embarrassment, Behire passionately

[24] "'Emin ol ki benim istediğim adam öyle bir roman kahramanları gibi fevkalade ve bulunmaz bir adam değil […] Benim 'futur'üm" akıllı, malumatlı, güzel ve zengin olacak […] Fransızcayı hemen bir Fransız kadar bilirim.'" Suat Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2016), 7.
[25] "'Yani evde kalırsın ve tabii yengenin evine gidersin,' Behire hiddetle, dedi. […] 'Yengenin evi mi?' diye hayretle sordum." Ibid., 9.
[26] "'Yengemin evi, kocaları tarafından atılmış kadınlarla evlenememiş ihtiyar kızların meskenidir.'" Ibid. Emphasis mine.
[27] "Behire'ye baktım. Yanaklarını gözlerinin altına ve şakaklarını kulaklarına kadar kızartan bir heyecanla anlatıyordu." Ibid.

described the revolutionary nature of the *yengenin evi* and why ending up unmarried did not seem like the curse Sabiha suggested it would be.

Behire was not overly concerned about the prospect of ageing or not finding a husband because of the positive examples in her life. Following the death of her husband, Behire's aunt, "still beautiful at the age of seventy," transferred her love and energies to politics.[28] She obsessively read the newspaper and held debates with the five women who also lived in her house. Behire affirmed, "In all the world, the parliaments, conferences, and congresses are not as fiery and important as this five-woman assembly."[29] Living together and independently, *without men*, they possessed the freedom to debate and discuss the matters of the day. Behire noted that though united by both gender and their lack of spouses, these women were not a monolithic block. One resident, Lütfiye Hanım, was "more sentimental, womanlier," than her aunt who got "so fired up from speaking, if you put a big knife in her hand, she has the strength to cut off the head of a thousand enemies."[30] By showing the variety of personalities amongst the home's residents, Behire highlighted that these women had the freedom to be their own selves and that there were multiple types of womanhood. As a result, Behire viewed the *yengenin evi* as a "sanctuary."[31] She did not ascribe lesser value to this space because its residents were older widows and spinsters. Instead she emphasized that it provided safety and autonomy for women

[28] "'Dayım hayattayken sade kocasıyla meşgul olan yengem, onun ölümden beri bütün aşkını siyasiyata vermiştir.'" Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 9-10.
[29] "'Dünya yüzündeki millet meclisleri, konferanslar, kongreler, bu beş kadının meclisi kadar ateşli ve mühim olamaz.'" Ibid., 10.
[30] "'Yengem böyle konuşurken büsbütün ateşlenir, emine eline büyük bir bıçak verilse bin düşmanı tek başına kesecek kadar kendine kuvvet bulur […] Lütfiye Hanım öyle değildir. O daha santimantal, daha daha kadındır.'" Ibid.
[31] "'Yengemin evi, ta öteden beri kocasından boşanmış kadınlarla evlenmemiş kızlara melce [sığınacak yer] olmuştur.'" Ibid., 11.

in a world where they had few options beyond remaining with their parents or moving into their matrimonial homes.

By the novel's end, several years had passed, and Behire reencountered Sabiha, concluding the saga of her numerous suitors. Her last marriage prospect shattered Behire emotionally, and Sabiha attempted to make her friend feel better. She said, "Poor Behire. But it is not right to be so hopeless […] Of course you will find your ideal. You are so *young*, so beautiful that…"[32] Sabiha's framing of Behire's situation as not being dire was predicated upon Behire's still marriageable age. Yet, these remarks were not met happily: "Behire violently pulled her hands from mine and jumped up. With grandness, narrowing her eyes and twisting her lips, she said, 'Sabiha, please do not mention again my ideal, my marriage.'"[33] Behire was both upset about her final suitor and frustrated that Sabiha continued to press the issue of marriage. As discussed in the previous chapter on romance, Behire refused her final proposal because it became clear her potential fiancé needed Behire's financial contribution (i.e. her dowry) to their marriage as opposed to love conquering all. In spite of this unhappiness, Derviş finished her protagonist's story on an optimistic note. She wrote, "Later, Behire softened a little and cocked her neck, 'But my dear, a person can also live in the *yengenin evi*.'"[34] Where most women like Sabiha would have still chosen to get married, Behire refused to let societal expectation define her choices, and ultimately, she chose autonomy and self-respect over the prescribed roles for young Turkish women. With this ending, Derviş embraced Mustafa Kemal's announcement when he announced that women in the new Turkish Republic would be free. For women like the

[32] "'Zavallı Behire' dedim. 'Fakat böyle ümitsiz olmak hiç doğru değil […] Elbette idealini bulacaksın. Öyle genç, öyle güzelsin ki…'" Derviş, *Behire'nin Talipleri*, 49. Emphasis mine.
[33] "Behire şiddetle ellerini ellerimden çekerek yerinden fırladı. Azametle gözlerini kısıp dudaklarını bükerek: 'Sabiha, rica ederim bana bir daha idealimden, izdivacımdan bahsetme...'" Ibid.
[34] "Sonra biraz yumuşayarak boynun büktü: 'Ma cherie, insan yengesinin evinde de yaşayabiliyor.'" Ibid.

author and her fictional protagonist, their ideal was that the New Turkey would provide them with the autonomy to make the best choices for themselves.

Yet as the 1920s progressed, the reality for young women in both Italy and Turkey would echo Maria Messina's depiction of young women's continued subordination by the Fascist regime in *A Flower that did not bloom* (*Un fiore che non fiorì*, 1923). Messina's protagonist, Franca, was a precursor to the demonized "crisis woman" (*donna-crisi*), an advertising archetype that emerged in Fascist propaganda by the early 1930s. In the Fascist imaginary, this figure was "a dangerous type of well-to-do modern women with an extremely thin and consequently sterile body that purportedly confirmed her cosmopolitan, non-domestic, non-maternal, and non-fascist interests."[35] Living in Florence, Franca filled her days with tennis, visits to her older aunt, attending a conference or concert, going to the cinema or theater, and "inevitably, the walk to the Corso and the usual meeting with the usual friends."[36] Her actions were far from domestic, and she very publicly lived her life.

After her father's position required her to relocate to Sicily, Franca reencountered her paramour Stefano but accidentally broke up his sister's engagement through a series of misunderstandings. As a result, she returned to Florence but her old social circle also ostracized Franca for her behavior. Miserable and emotionally struggling, she thought, "Even here, among the usual people who think they know me, I cannot be me."[37] Franca felt trapped by these intensified standards for young women's behavior. When her Aunt Fabiana, a devout Catholic

[35] Natasha V. Chang, *The Crisis-Woman: Body Politics and the Modern Women in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 3.
[36] "I pomeriggi e le serate erano pieni e, a volte, quasi divertenti: il tennis in casa Mammola, le visite in compagnia di zia (che impegnata in una vera contabilità segnava in un quaderno le visite fatte e quelle ricevute), una conferenza o un concerto, il cinematografo o il teatro [...] e, immancabilmente, la passeggiata per il Corso, e il solito incontro con le solite amiche." Maria Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì* (Milan: Fratelli Treves Editori, 1923), 43-4.
[37] "'Pure qui, in mezzo alla solita gente che crede di conoscermi, io non posso esser io.'" Ibid., 161.

woman, witnessed Franca crying, she asked the younger woman what she was hiding. Dodging the question, Franca begged, "Do you not have a small farm that I do not know? All almond and olive trees?"[38] Exasperated, the older woman cried, "*Dio buonino!* [Good God] […] You want to go to Pineto."[39] The only sanctuary left to Franca was her aunt's country farm on Italy's central Adriatic coast. However, unlike Behire's opportunity to share a space with older women in urban and cosmopolitan Istanbul, Franca sought out near total isolation.

Begging Aunt Fabiana to not be angry, she explained, "I am so small and there is no place for me in a world that is so big."[40] Franca's attitude differed from Behire's; where the Turkish young woman knew a place existed for her family and societal expectations in the *yengenin evi*, Franca believed no such place existed for her anywhere. Because Messina's view of the nature of Italian Fascist gender politics was more pessimistic, the house in Pineto from the start did not present Franca with the same level of autonomy as the *yengenin evi*. Though Franca enjoyed the quiet and anonymity of the coast and got along with her aunt, she descended further into depression. These multigenerational accommodations in *Behire's Suitors* and *A Flower that did not bloom* presented a degree of solidarity amongst women but ultimately these supportive relationships would be destabilized throughout years of Fascist and Kemalist politics, as analyzed in the next section.

[38] "'Non ài tu un podere che io non conosco? Tutto mandorli e olive?'" Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì*, 162.
[39] "'Dio buonino!' gridò zia Fabiana, 'Vorresti andare a Pineto!'" Ibid.
[40] "'Non ti arrabbiare, zia […] Sono tanto piccola e pure non c'è un posto per me, nel mondo che è tanto grande.'" Ibid..

Generational Conflict

During the 1920s and into the 1930s, generational conflict was central to the Fascist and Kemalist regimes' subordination of young women. In the Turkish context, divisions between the "old" and the "new" were drawn immediately in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the First World War. In Halide Edip's novel *The Shirt of Flame* (*Ateşten Gömlek*, 1923), frustration with the old actualized itself along generational lines during the War of Independence. The question of how Anatolia would be governed was vociferously debated throughout the country, and the author reflected on the different viewpoints that emerged, particularly in Istanbul, along both age and class lines. At the time of drafting *The Shirt of Flame* (about four months before the Fall of Izmir), Halide Edip was around 38 years old, and in her sweeping, heavily autobiographical fiction, she expressed that her affinities—political and social— belonged with the youth and the Nationalist movement, outraged at Allied Powers' support for the disintegration of Anatolia.

In *The Shirt of Flame*, Halide Edip established generational and geographic dichotomies between women. Throughout the novel, her fictional avatar, the protagonist Ayşe was a beacon of hope for the people who supported independence, as well as an object of love for multiple men. After losing her husband and young son to the invading Greek forces, Ayşe fled to Istanbul where she took refuge with relatives. She found the city divided amongst citizens who accepted the Sultan's acquiescence to the Allied Powers and those who vehemently refused to comply. Halide Edip located this division along geographic and generational lines. The older women accepting the occupation lived on the European side of the city while their opponents lived on the Asian side. She wrote, "University students, young women writers, young teachers […] ignore the other side of the bridge. They are indifferent to the women of their own class unless

they are young. […] they are considered too democratic and uncivilized by Shisly [Şişli]."[41] For supporters of the national cause, they found solidarity through their age as opposed to socioeconomic markers. In taking this position, Halide Edip disavowed the peers she grew up with on the European side *and* those in her age cohort. She decried the Şişli women supporting the occupation as "a group of middle-aged, over-dressed and French-speaking elegant wives of old ambassadors." Unlike these treacherous women, she characterized the "Istanbul" women as "younger and livelier."[42] Upon her arrival from Izmir, Ayşe immediately found herself at odds with the Şişli women, including her aunt who provided her refuge.

After Ayşe debated an English colonel and the Şişli women in favor of the occupation, her aunt lost her social status. As a result, Peyami's mother attempted to subordinate Ayşe by reinforcing familial age hierarchies. Warning her son and his male friends against Ayşe's "rabble-rousing," she declared, "It is my provincial niece […] who has turned your heads. I feel that this game will lead you far."[43] Unlike younger women in the city, Ayşe's aunt viewed politics as a lesser concern and not one of life or death. The older woman additionally charged Ayşe with enchanting the young men, "turning their heads" as if to suggest that they were not being logical. When Ayşe and Peyami finally fled Istanbul to join the nationalist movement in Anatolia, his mother (Ayşe's aunt) passed final judgment upon her kin. Surveying the city behind them, Peyami "thought of the two black eyes of my mother. They were dim, they were *old*, they were filled with tears and they cursed me: 'I pray to Allah that thy heart may ever burn, thy life

[41] Şişli was and remains an affluent neighborhood on the European side of the city. Halide Edip herself did the English translation for this novel. Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame (Ateshden Ceumlek)* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1924), 25.
[42] Ibid., 25-6.
[43] Ibid., 52.

may ever pass in longing and regret!'"[44] With Peyami choosing his cousin Ayşe over his mother, Halide Edip argued that the old who opposed freedom were shrouded in darkness and did not understand what was at stake for the nation. In comparison to her aunt, Ayşe constantly wore "the shirt of flame," and Halide Edip articulated that young women, alongside young men, would guide the nation into a new and glorious future.

In Fascist Italy, generational conflict largely emerged after the transition towards dictatorship in 1925. Grazia Deledda began writing *Annalena Bilsini* in this year and she used sections of this novel to explore the relationship between the elder Annalena and Isabella Mantovani, Gina Bilsini's younger sister and a marriage prospect for Annalena's unmarried sons. A key way in which generational conflict emerged was through Isabella's appearance and her affect. When Annalena first met Isabella, Deledda wrote, "The bursting into the room of a small blonde girl wrapped in a red shawl […] her manner of dress—light, the low-cut shiny shoes on flesh-colored stockings that covered the tapered legs with a second skin—completed the illusion that spring had already arrived with her."[45] Unlike in her descriptions of Annalena and Gina, Deledda emphasized Isabella's sartorial aesthetic as a means of differentiation. Rural women like Annalena traditionally wore dark-colored aprons and shawls, boots, and heavy stockings. Conversely, Isabella's red shawl captured the eye; her shiny shoes lacked practicality, and her tapered legs implied a different physicality.

Within age cohort hierarchies, views towards young women often deemed them silly or inconsequential. Often Gina and other members of the Bilsini clan referred to Isabella through

[44] Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, 83. Italics mine.
[45] "l'irrompere nella stanza di una piccola ragazza bionda avvolta in uno scialle rosso […] Il suo modo di vestire, leggero, le scarpette lucide scollate sulle calze color carne che rivestivano di una seconda pelle le gambe affusolate, completavano l'illusione che con lei fosse già arrivata la primavera." Grazia Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini* (Milan: Fratelli Treves Editori, 1927), 72.

the diminutive nickname "Bellina" ("Little Isabella") or simply referred to her as "*la ragazza*," or "the girl."[46] Within the microcosm of the Bilsini homestead, Isabella became the subject of objectification by both the men and the older Annalena. Annalena's soldier-son Pietro considered her as a potential wife, but found her lacking. Initially imagining himself with his sister-in-law Gina, "For a moment, in a jolt of his conscience, [Pietro] tried to replace her with Isabella; but immediately he discarded the girl: too sour and childish, albeit mischievous, he did not like it at all: she did not have the flavor of forbidden fruit."[47] While much of Pietro's inner monologue revealed his flaws and character defects, calling Isabella "childish" reflected a social reading of the "modern" young woman. Unlike her sister, Isabella projected confidence that made other characters feel uneasy. Deledda wrote, "Laughter of freshness and splendor that seemed to flow from her whole person, from her gauzy pink and yellow dress, from the canary hair, from the basket she held, full of large peaches whose color matched wonderfully with hers."[48] The basket of fruit connotated Isabella's vitality and her procreative future. Although Isabella believed she was helping the family, the other characters viewed her as out of place. Fearful of feeling sexual attraction, aspiring priest Baldo fled the room, because "The figure of her, so showy and noisy, made him ill: it seemed to be that of mortal sin."[49]

Where Annalena was *donna-madre* ("mother-woman")—rural, robust, and prolific as the mother of five sons—she viewed Isabella as decadent and unsuited for work.[50] Thinking of the

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[46] Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 73.
[47] "Per un attimo, in un sussulto della sua coscienza, tentò di sostituirla con Isabella; ma subito scartò la ragazza: troppo acerba ed infantile, sebbene maliziosa, non gli piaceva del tutto: non aveva il colore del frutto proibito." Ibid., 93.
[48] "Risata di freschezza e di splendore che pareva sgorgasse da tutta la persona di lei, dal vestito di velo rosa e giallo, dai capelli canarini, dal cestino ch'ella reggeva, colo di grosse pesche i cui colori si intonavano meravigliosamente con quelli di lei." Ibid., 176.
[49] "Ma Baldo era già scappato via, perché la figura dei lei, così sgargiante e chiassosa, a lui faceva male: gli sembrava quella del peccato mortale." Ibid., 177.
[50] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 73.

labors on the Bilsini farm, Annalena commented to the her, "Your sister and the others are in the vineyard harvesting white grapes: do you want to go there too? You will stain your dress, though."[51] When unconsciously comparing Gina working in the vineyards and Isabella standing in front of her in a gauzy dress, "Annalena once again felt a sense of discomfort, thinking again that this was not the appropriate wife for Pietro."[52] Once her son returned from the army, he would work on the family farm and needed a wife up to the task. Annalena believed that romantic love was a foolish notion, that Isabella in her brightly colored dresses would not be able to handle the realities of married life that involved farm work and other physically demanding chores. Based on Isabella's physical and emotional presentation, Annalena seriously doubted that she could handle the transition from young girl to married workhorse.

Recognizing the older woman's misgivings, Isabella advocated for herself and critiqued others' perceptions of her based on her appearance and affect. Although she knew that society failed to offer her any other options for happiness, she made her choice on her own desires. She knew that the family and Pietro did not take her seriously. Deledda wrote, "Isabella seemed to guess this thought; suddenly she turned, clung childishly to the woman, kissed her and said with sadness, 'I know, I know that you do not have faith in me. I know; and also he, Pietro, does not love me, I know; yet I want him even if it does not seem like it, when we would marry, I know also that I will know how to work, even if it happens, barefoot and disheveled.'"[53] Isabella knew that those around her perceived her as inferior or naïve because of her age and demeanor, and she

[51] "'Tua sorella e gli altri sono nella vigna a vendemmiare l'uva bianca: vuoi andarci anche tu? Ti macchierai il vestito però.' Disse Annalena raggiungendola." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 177.
[52] "Ed anche lei [Annalena] provò di nuovo un senso di sconforto, pensando ancora una volta che quella non era una moglie adatta per Pietro." Ibid.
[53] "Isabella parve indovinare questo pensiero; di botto si volse, si avviticchiò infantilmente alla donna, la baciò e disse con tristezza: 'Lo, so, lo so che non avete fiducia in me. Lo so; ed anche lui, Pietro, non mi vuol bene, lo so; eppure io gliene voglio, per quanto non sembri, e quando ci saremo sposati saprò anch'io lavorare, anche se occorre, scalza e scarmigliata…'" Ibid., 178.

openly challenged their criticism: "You all think I am carefree."[54] Isabella continued, her face darkening like a "rose about to wither." She continued, "But I am serious, and inside of me I have many thoughts and I do not delude myself about the future. Pietro will make me rather unhappy."[55] "Isabella, bent her head on her shoulder and seemed to want to cry; then, she rose, all vibrant and laughing again. 'Give me a smock, or I will take one of Gina's. I will go harvest too.' She ran away in flight, singing."[56] In the face of criticism from the Bilsini family, Isabella advocated for herself and made her own choices for her own happiness.

Where *Annalena Bilsini* took place on a rural farm, Isabella's experience paralleled that of urban Belkıs, Nezihe Muhiddin's protagonist in *Beauty Queen* (*Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 1935). This story demonstrated that whether in terms of legislation or aesthetics, Turkish women were subjected to the demands of the state. Belkıs passed from girlhood to womanhood during the 1920s. In order to orient the nation "westward," and to demonstrate to Europeans that Turkey belonged amongst its ranks, sartorial reforms (among other modernization efforts) dominated Kemalist aesthetics. Historian Ayşe Saraçgil writes,

> Urban women, heads uncovered, in shorts, walking arm in arm with their husbands or in wards with a doctor's coat, were potent symbols raised to demonstrate the extraordinary modernity of a Muslim nation that became secular. This imposition, which disregarded gender conflict, excluded each female protagonist.[57]

This iconography of the "ideal," modern Turkish woman – arm and arm with husbands, unveiled – erased the persistent gender inequities as perpetuated by the Kemalists. Through this imagery,

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[54] "'Egli vuol bene a tutte le donne ed a nessuna. È questo. Voi tutti mi credete spensierata.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 178.
[55] "riprese la fanciulla, che s'era oscurata in viso come una rosa che sta per appassire; 'io invece sono seria, e dentro di me faccio tanti pensieri e non m'illudo sull'avvenire. Pietro mi renderà forse infelice.'" Ibid., 178-9.
[56] "Isabella le piegò la testa sulla spalla, e parve volesse piangere; poi si sollevò, tutta vibrante e di nuovo ridente. 'Datemi un grembiale; o prendo quello di Gina. Vado a vendemmiare anch'io.' E corse via di volo, cantando." Ibid., 179.
[57] Ayşe Saraçgil, "I contesti storico-politici del protagonismo femminile turco," *LEA – Lingue e letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente* 6 (2017): 729.

state-down reforms often refused to allow women to be active participants in these social, political, and cultural transformations. In an article on women's representation in Early Republican novels, Aziz Şeker briefly explores works by only two women authors, Halide Edip and Nezihe Muhiddin. In comparing Muhiddin's work to Halit Ziya, a prolific male author, Şeker notes that she created women who were "exceptional": beauty queens, princesses, slaves, musicians, or lawyers. With her characters embodying positions or statuses that did not reflect the "average" woman, Muhiddin "envisioned numerous relations between women and men *and* women and women, and did not judge these relations most of the time."[58] The article continues, "Despite being affected by forms of restraint, women [in Muhiddin's works] always have a say over their bodies. In the harem, on boats, in hotels, at konaks, in doctor's offices, in movie theaters, in prisons, we encounter women who want only to control their own sexuality."[59]

Muhiddin did judge the relationships between her protagonists and the men and women they encountered and often commented how men sought to limit women's control of their bodies and sexuality. Furthermore, while bodily autonomy was integral to equality and respect, there were other social and political aspects that Turkish women did not have control over in the first decades of the Republic. They also wanted control not only over their sexuality but over their life choices, future spouses, household roles, and their ability to be exceptional without recrimination. The following section will expand from Şeker's argument of Muhiddin's fictional women participating in an eternal struggle with their mothers. In my reading of her work, she portrayed generational conflict, not one just between mothers and daughters, and one actively exacerbated by the Kemalist modernization project.

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[58] Aziz Şeker, "Türk Romanında Toplumsal Cinsiyet açısından Kadın Temsillerine Yönelik Sosyolojik bir Çözümleme," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 10, no. 54 (2017): 645.
[59] Ibid.

Generational conflict was embedded with the regime's reliance on gender politics to perpetuate the patriarchal system. In 1935's *Beauty Queen*, Belkıs embodied the regime's prescriptions for urban, unveiled, and fashionable "modern" Turkish woman who would be at odds with her future mother-in-law who experienced life before the establishment of the Republic. She actively took advantage of the Kemalists' calculated encouragement of allowing women into public, whether by playing tennis or attending champagne-filled parties. After astounding the crowd at her first ball, Belkıs thought to herself, "I am beautiful […] I am very beautiful," and recalled the flirtatious journalist Vedat Naci's face. This young man's features suddenly shifted into those of her fiancé, Nedim Münir, Muhiddin mentioned now for the very first time. As a result, "The young girl felt a pain in her heart that resembled the torture of regret."[60] Belkıs thought that she should write to her fiancé, confessing about the events of the evening, in order to ease her guilt. But Belkıs's thoughts shifted and she wondered, "What was her sin? […] Was she not free in her feelings, in excitements?"[61] Muhiddin's protagonist's feelings echoed Saraçgil's assessment that "the claim of female subjectivity automatically led to conflict."[62] Emotionally and intellectually, Belkıs found herself split on how she should behave. Believing that Kemalist gender politics wanted her to make autonomous decisions and claim her subjectivity, Belkıs would face criticism for her choices as being improper and her guilt served as a powerful mode of shame and social engineering.

[60] "Bu genç simaların birdenbire bir hayal daha karıştı. Bu, Belkıs'ın nişanlısı Nedim Münir'in sarışın çehresi idi. Genç kız, kalbinde birdenbire nedamet ezasına benzeyen bir sızı duydu." Nezihe Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, in *Nezihe Muhiddin: Bütün Eserleri 1*, ed. Yaprak Zihnioğlu (Istanbul: Mor Kitaplık, 2006), 126.
[61] "Hangi günahının ezasını hissediyordu? Heyecanlarında, hislerinde hür değil miydi? Hayatında daima bir erkek gibi yaşamaya azmetmemiş miydi?" Ibid.
[62] Saraçgil, "I contesti storico-politici del protagonismo femminile turco," 732.

After a night out at a ball, Belkıs received a summons from her future mother-in-law. Crossing the yard, the older woman's maid announced, "My young lady! […] The lady wants you."[63] There was deference in the way the servant spoke, certainly, by not calling her by her first name; however, she demonstrated the difference between her employer and Belkıs with the distinguishing "young" lady. Instead of requesting or asking her to come over, the older woman "wanted" her; there was no politeness or the option of postponing their meeting. Before even responding to the summons, "Belkıs's insides tightened with a strange shiver."[64] She instinctively recognized that such a meeting would not be filled with friendly overtures or kind words.

When Belkıs entered her future mother-in-law's private quarters, readers immediately perceive a contrast between the two women. Belkıs had just returned from an evening out, filled with champagne, dancing, and gossip; her future mother-in-law was at prayer. Her identity was bound up both in her status and most importantly, her age. Throughout this interaction, Muhiddin never gave this older woman a name; she was "*hanımefendi* (lady)," "*yaşlı kadın* (aged woman)," "*ihtiyar kadın* (old woman)," "*anne* (mother)," "*Nedim Münir'in annesi* (Nedim Münir's mother)," and finally, "*kadıncağız* (poor woman)."[65] *Yaşlı kadın* and *ihtiyar kadın* are both ways of saying "aged" or "old" and her status as Nedim Münir's mother separated her from Belkıs. It demonstrated two distinct but related modes of power because, amongst the two, the older woman would soon have even more power over her future daughter-in-law.

[63] "'Küçükhanımcığım!…Hanımefendi sizi istiyor…'" Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 152.
[64] "Belkıs'ın içini garip bir ürperme sardı." Ibid.
[65] For "kadıncağız," Muhiddin wrote, "Nedim Münir'in annesi tekrar ağlamaya başlamıştı. Belkıs hiçbir şey yapamıyordu. Kadıncağız gözlerini sildikten sonra korka korka sordu." Ibid., 152-4.

Upon folding her prayer rug and gathering her prayer ring, the older woman failed to greet Belkıs warmly. She directly addressed the young woman, asking, "How many days has it been since you have been seen here Belkıs?"[66] Being called by her first name reflected that Belkıs was still an individual, as she had not gained a different identity that marked her by being Nedim Münir's wife. Although they were not yet married, Belkıs had responsibilities to her future household, and her behavior affected *their* honor and status. The older woman sought to shame Belkıs for abandoning or ignoring her soon-to-be family. In enjoying her new public social life, she prioritized her individual feelings. Recognizing that she should have considered the collective (her future in-laws), Belkıs struggled to find a response, already sensing reproach from her future mother-in-law. Muhiddin wrote, "The young girl stammered. The old woman, holding back tears with difficulty, exclaimed, 'I know everything […] I have had word of your new activities!"[67] Here, Muhiddin referred to Belkıs as a "girl" or "*kız*" as opposed to a "woman" or "*kadın*." Her future mother-in-law's rebuke reduced her to a lower age status; they were not equals. Belkıs's public presence—dancing, drinking champagne, attending fashionable balls—brought shame to her future in-laws. In attempting to assert her authority, Nedim Münir's mother reduced Belkıs to a stammering and ashamed girl.

The older woman's disappointment and anger represented a dominant tension in the first years of the regime: continuity and change. The former owed to deeply ingrained hierarchies of age prevalent in Ottoman households dating back to the early modern era. The latter demonstrated that Kemalist social engineering intensified generational conflict. In the seminal *The Imperial Harem*, historian Leslie Peirce documented how women in the royal Ottoman

[66] "'Kaç günlerdir bir kere olsun görünmedin Belkıs?'" Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 153.
[67] "'Meşguliyet…' Genç kız kekeliyordu. Yaşlı kadın da gözyaşlarını zor tutuyordu: 'Hepsini biliyorum…Yeni meşguliyetlerinizden haberdarım!'" Ibid.

household wielded power vis-à-vis their sons. Once a woman's son claimed or inherited the throne, she became the leading female figure as the *valide sultan*, or mother of the sultan and had the power to exert her own authority, a pattern repeated in "ordinary" households. In spite of a shift from empire to republic, where the Kemalists declared a sharp break with the despotic and undemocratic monarchical past, Nedim Münir's mother remained the *valide sultan* in her non-imperial household. Even in the early twentieth century, the family was not a democratic institution. In August 1925, Hatife Refik contributed an article to *Türk Kadın Yolu*, the journal of which Muhiddin served as editor, entitled "Kadın – Valide" ("Woman – Mother"). Of any status for a woman, the most important and essential was *valide* and this article demonstrates that these attitudes persisted into the Kemalist Era. Hatife Refik wrote,

> The reason why such an important position is given to women is that she is the master of responsibilities which are truly important and related to the life of all nations, such as *validelik*, wifehood, and a leader of the family […] Without a doubt, everyone is united in agreement that *validelik* is the most important and fundamental of these three responsibilities.[68]

The older woman exerted power over Belkıs because her *validelik* was the culmination of her role in the household, as Nedim Münir's mother, she derived her power from him over her daughter-in-law. Her actions featured the continuity of Ottoman social practice and gender hierarchy into the Kemalist era. Familial power in the historical context was not strictly the purview of men. Mothers of sons frequently collaborated with their husband led to the control of all movements, sexuality, and often life decisions of men, women, and children within in the

[68] "Kadına bu kadar mühim mevki verilmesinin sebebi, kendisinin validelik, zevcelik, aile reisesi gibi cidden mühim, tekmil milletlerin hayatiyle alakadar olan vezaifin sahibesi olmasıdır […] Şüphesiz bu üç vazifeden en mühim ve en asıl olanı validelik olduğunu tasdikte herkes müttefiktir." Hatice Refik, "Kadın – Valide," *Türk Kadın Yolu* 4 (6 August 1341/1925), in *Kadın Yolu/Türk Kadın Yolu (1925-1927) Yeni Harflerle*, ed. Nevin Yurdserver Ateş (Istanbul: Kadın Eserleri ve Kütuphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı Yayınları, 2009), 4.

household.[69] Instead of solidarity vis-à-vis gender, older women supported their husbands and maintained patterns of age-determinant power.

In addition to their encounter being predicated upon their soon-to-be relationship within their family, there was also an element of generational divide based upon Kemalist modernization efforts. After hearing of Belkıs's evening activities and her lack of contact with her son, Nedim Münir's mother viewed the younger woman as selfish and misled by changes in Turkish society. As a further means of tightening control her control over Belkıs, the older woman presented a telegraph from Nedim Münir, asking for news of his fiancée's health since he had not received word from her in fifteen days. Belkıs's weak nerves, already on edge with the stressful events of the preceding days, could not resist the burning of her memories.[70] Feeling ill, Belkıs watched as her future mother-in-law began to cry. After the sobs subsided, she asked Belkıs, "Who knows how sad my Nedim is in a far land!"[71] As the older woman began to weep again, Belkıs "could not do anything."[72] Nedim Münir's mother consistently tried to make Belkıs feel shame and guilt for her actions. Indeed, "the poor woman after wiping her eyes, frightenedly asked, "Have you written a letter Belkıs?"[73] Muhiddin wrote, "The young girl suffered a deep torment in face of this tender pain," responding, "I have been a little ill. I have not written yet."[74] By describing her torment as *derin* (deep), the author suggested both a physical and emotional

[69] Paul Ginsborg, *Family Politics: Domestic Life, Devastation and Survival, 1900-1950* (New Have: Yale University Press, 2014), 79-80.
[70] "Belkıs'ın kaç günlerdir devam eden buhranlı hadiselerle hastalanan zayıf asabı, hatıraların tahrikine mukavemet edemedi." Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 153.
[71] "Sağanak geçtikten sonra zavallı annenin titrek sesi hıçkırıklarla pürüzlenerek mırıldanmaya başladı, 'Nedim'çiğim gurbet diyarlarında kim bilir ne kadar mahzundur şimdi!'" Ibid., 154.
[72] "Nedim Münir'in annesi tekrar ağlamaya başlamıştı. Belkıs hiçbir şey yapamıyordu." Ibid.
[73] "Kadıncağız gözlerini sildikten sonra korka korka sordu, 'Yazdın mı mektup Belkıs?'" Ibid.
[74] "Genç kız bu müşfik ıstırap karşısında derin bir azap çekiyordu. 'Biraz hastaydım. Henüz yazmadım.'" Ibid.

feeling. It reached into the depth of her being and seemingly stabbed her heart.[75] In her analysis of Kemalist gender politics, historian Holly Shissler explains one of the main tensions striking at Belkıs's core. While seemingly encouraging its citizenry to "modernize," the Kemalist regime emphasized that "frivolity was discouraged in favor of an ethos of duty and self-sacrifice."[76] Emancipation and education were only acceptable if an urban woman like Belkıs "turned her back on the frivolities of life, and trained herself to serve the nation."[77] In the views of her mother-in-law (and many other members in society) Belkıs betrayed not only her fiancé and his family, but also the nation because she used her emancipation for *herself*.

Women like Isabella and Belkıs found themselves trapped in a world of impossible standards for young women. Where elements of the Fascist and Kemalist projects encouraged their public participation, the regimes also continued to perpetuate the notion that the best and the *right* place for young women was as wives and mothers at home. Traditional authority structures that gave mothers-in-law power over their sons' young wives conflicted with propaganda about the "new, modern" woman that created intolerable conflict.

Youth in Revolt?: Depression and Young Women

In the 1920s and 1930s, Turkish publications frequently featured articles on youth and gender concerns. In *Lovely Moon* (*Sevimli Ay*)'s May 1926 issue, Feridun Necdet warned that Turkish women "misunderstood modernity" and as a result, shirked their responsibilities, such as

[75] "'Senin için masum yaşında ağlayan, seni karanlık fırtınalı gecelerde sayıklayan yavrumu gurbet ellerinde mahzum bırakmaya gönlün nasıl razı oldu Belkıs? Nasıl razı oldu? Benim bir tanecik evladıma yazık değil mi?' İhtiyar anne inliyordu. Belkıs pek güçlükle ayağa kalktı." Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 154.
[76] A. Holly Shissler, "'If You Ask Me': Sabiha Sertel's Advice Column, Gender Equity, and Social Engineering in the Early Turkish Republic," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 2 (2007): 4.
[77] Ginsborg, *Family Politics*, 117.

"[looking] after their children."[78] Less than a year later, in the journal's February 1927 issue, an article appeared about the youth problem and articulated that it plagued not only Turkey but the whole world.[79] Hoping to inspire broad social discussion, the author asked,

> What do today's youth think and believe? […] Rebellion against the past and tradition is widespread among today's youth. They do not like religion, they do not like the social order, and they laugh at our ethical principles. This is not something peculiar to our country alone; the youth of the whole world is caught up in a general rebellion of this kind.[80]

In the interwar period, gender and age intertwined to create social concerns for both Fascist Italy and Kemalist Turkey. Novels by Grazia Deledda and Nezihe Muhiddin depicted young women suffering from depression. Where other characters blamed the girls personally or their mothers for their mental health, the authors indicated that these young women as emotionally and psychologically affected by the Fascist and Kemalist regimes' demands. Tensions about their behavior and conformity or lack of conformity exacerbated their feelings of identity and inadequacy.

Social engineering intertwining gender and chronological age produced significant psycho-emotional problems for women. In both *Annalena Bilsini* and *Beauty Queen*, characters Lia Giannini and Belkıs exhibited symptoms of depression. Yet when expressing melancholy, reticence, or anything but "happiness," their family members and acquaintances dismissed their feelings or sought to minimize them. Firstly, people around Lia and Belkıs believed that because they were *young*, they did not have a reason to be depressed. Secondly, because their own mothers suffered from mental illness, their feelings were attributed to inherited disposition. As a

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[78] Feridun Necdet, "'Bir erkek karısından neler bekler?'" in Alan Duben and Cem Bahar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility, 1880-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 197.
[79] Ibid.
[80] "Bugünkü Gençliği Ne Düşünüyor ve Neye İnanıyor?," *Sevimli Ay* (February 1927) quoted in A. Holly Shissler, "'If You Ask Me,'" 10.

result, their families and acquaintances did not consider social and political pressures as a result of Fascist and Kemalist gender politics as a cause for Lia and Belkıs's depression. Rejections of their unhappiness on the basis of their chronological age and family-history of mental illness invalidated and denied the right to their feelings. By including these characters, Deledda and Muhiddin commented upon political attitudes towards young women's depression. Scholars indicate that Fascist authorities most likely concealed suicide cases in order to preserve the image of the "strong Italian," but throughout the *Ventennio* sociologists published numerous texts on the subject.[81] Turkish medical experts also put out numerous books on suicide and "female hysteria."[82] Frequently, however, they focused on perceived innate emotionality in women and girls as the cause for their unhappiness, as opposed to linking their depression to broader political and cultural trends in society.

In *Annalena Bilsini*, Lia Giannini resisted state dictates for young Italian women. Lia, the daughter of the Bilsinis' landlord, first appeared halfway through the novel, accompanying her father to the Bilsini household on Holy Saturday. When describing Lia, Deledda called her "a girl of sixteen years old, but rather frail and small, timid, and moody."[83] Throughout the novel, characters refused to grant Lia any agency because of her age, showing both contempt and a lack of sympathy for the young woman's subjectivity, desires, and emotions. Whereas Isabella, the novel's other woman character in her age cohort was described as "vivacious," Lia appeared opaque and *miserable*.[84] Because Deledda firmly grounded Lia through her age and emotions,

[81] Paolo L. Bernardini, "Introduction: A Culture of Death," in *Voglio Morire!: Suicide in Italian Literature, Culture, and Society 1789-1919*, ed. Paolo L. Bernardini and Anita Virga (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 22.
[82] Nazan Maksudyan, "Control over Life, Control over Body: Female Suicide in Early Republican Turkey," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 6 (2015): 872.
[83] "una ragazza di diciassette anni, ma così gracile e piccola, timida e scontrosa." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 137.
[84] "La vivacità d'Isabella, che era venuta con loro a visitare i Bilsini, rendeva più opaca e misera la sua figura." Ibid.

readers learned that she was perceived not a typical, "heathy" young woman in Fascist Italy. Walking with Annalena, Lia confided that she wanted to become a nun; the older woman's initial reaction was to laugh.

When Annalena introduced Lia to Baldo, her son dreaming of becoming a friar, she commented that Lia wanted to become a *suora* (sister).[85] Unafraid to do so, Lia corrected the older woman; she wanted to be a "cloistered nun" (*monaca di clausura*).[86] Intrigued by finding a fellow faithful, Baldo inquired about her religious knowledge. When Lia explained that she only knew "the *Our Father*, the *Ave Maria*, and that is all (*e basta*)," Baldo asked her why she wanted to become a cloistered nun.[87] Deledda described the girl's physicality and affective reaction to his question, recognizing that he did not view her as an "ideal" or "qualified" candidate for the cloister: "Lia's small barbaric face still held a deep disgust: her soul seemed to fall back into shadow, '*Così.* Because I am tired of living and of suffering.'"[88] Deledda crucially included Lia's affective reaction to Baldo's question: her disgust, her soul falling into shadow. Her entire reaction was one of an individual exhausted with her existence and annoyed that yet another person questioned her desires.

Baldo's response expressed shock and credulity based upon his perceptions of Lia's age and her emotional state. He asked, "Lia! Why do you speak like this? How old are you?"[89] It was unfathomable to Baldo that someone would join a holy order not out of pure love for Christ but as a means of escape. He also did not understand how Lia, at the age of sixteen, could feel so

[85] "'Io voglio farmi monaca.' Allora rise forte. 'Anche il mio Baldo vuol farsi frate. Andrete tutti e due nello stesso convento.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 138.
[86] Ibid., 139-40.
[87] "'il pater nostro, l'avemaria e basta.'" Ibid., 142.
[88] "Il piccolo viso barbarico di Lia si atteggiò ancora a un disgusto profondo: e l'anima sua parve ricaduta nell'ombra. 'Così. Perché sono stanca di vivere e di soffrire.'" Ibid.
[89] "'Lia! Perché parli così? Quanti anni hai?'" Ibid.

tired with life. What was her suffering? To Baldo, Lia sounded like an older woman, burdened by long-term hardship. In turn, Lia was annoyed with his reaction. Deledda wrote, "The years! The age. This was the same question that Lia's father had revealed to Annalena and she to him. As if the greater or lesser distance from the beginning or from the end of life can mark a limit to love and pain."[90] Through Lia, Deledda demonstrated the young woman's self-awareness and complicated relationship to her role in society as dictated by her age. Her chronological years on earth were an arbitrary indicator of how she should feel. Within Fascist rhetoric, the expectation would be for Lia to embrace her life, to be excited for her future roles as wife and mother. But Lia recognized that the socially-constructed categories of "girl," "young woman," "woman," and "older woman" were just that: these age-structured identities did not dictate the emotions an individual could have. Responding to the young man, "Lia must have understood the question because she shrugged her shoulders and said almost with contempt: 'I do not know and I do not care.'"[91] For characters like Baldo, her father, and even Annalena, age structured the way they interacted with the world and how they interpreted the regime's exaltation of youth. Yet, Lia refused to accept the conditions placed on her by virtue of her age.

By including a character who wanted to become a nun, Deledda additionally provided commentary on the status of religion and the Church in Fascist Italy, and a possible avenue for women to assert their self-autonomy. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, religious orders provided considerable labor—not just working in the neediest communities but across the whole country. Unlike during the Liberal era where the state turned away from

[90] "Gli anni! Il tempo. Ecco la stessa domanda che il padre di Lia aveva rivolto ad Annalena e questa a lui. Come se la distanza più o meno grande dal principio o dalla fine della vita possa segnare un limite all'amore e al dolore." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 143.
[91] "E Lia doveva capirlo perché alzò le spalle e disse quasi con disprezzo: 'Non lo so e non me ne importa.'" Ibid.

church-run schools and institutions, the Fascists relied upon religious orders to provide fundamental work in the form of teachers, nurses, caretakers, etc. Between 1921 and 1936, the number of women taking vows increased from 71,679 to over 100,000.[92] As historian Alice Kelikian writes, "For many, service to Christ constituted the only creditable alternative to matrimony and childbed."[93] While a woman's reasons for taking religious vows varied, choosing to join an order served as a potential form of resistance to prevalent gender norms promoted by the regime.

Lia struggled to assert her individuality due to her family and society writ large. In *Annalena Bilsini*, the family gossiped about her. They said, "Do you know that the girl wants to be a cloistered nun? And you know that when she gets older, she will become like her mother? The fact alone that she wants to cloister herself demonstrates that she is already touched in the brain."[94] Throughout the novel, the local rumor mill swirled with stories about Lia's mother, and it was apparent in descriptions that she suffered from mental health issues. The Bilsinis then assumed that because Lia was young and unhappy, seeking to remove herself from the world, she also suffered from her mother's condition. The Bilsini brothers and even mother Annalena failed to consider that Fascist gender politics impacted Lia's life experiences. As a result, Deledda's characters refused to allow Lia any agency in terms of her emotions and choices.

Shortly after her conversation with Baldo, Lia disappeared. The Bilsini family, shown to be gossip-hungry throughout the novel, discussed this curious case. Pietro said, "The little girl will have run off with some dandy." Annalena's uncle Dionisio agreed, "They are like this, the

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[92] Alice A. Kelikian, "The Church and Catholicism," in *Liberal and Fascist Italy: 1900-1945*, ed. Adrian Lyttelton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 49.
[93] Ibid., 50. DeGrazia also says this in *How Fascism Ruled Women*.
[94] "'Ma non sai che la ragazza vuol farsi monaca? E non sai he, se invecchia, diventa come la madre? Il solo fatto che vuol monacarsi dimostra che già è toccata al cervello.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 206.

girls of today. In any event, all of this is strange, in this affair."[95] Within these discussions of Lia, characters rarely mention her by name—she was reduced to being simply "*la ragazzina,"* or *"la bambina*." Using these terms—"the little girl" or "the baby girl" diminished her agency. Through her infantilization, Lia's choices were critiqued and dismissed as being irrational. Shortly after Pietro suggested that Lia ran off with a man, Dionisio asked Annalena if it were possible that Lia had a lover. The older woman brutally responded, "No, no. You have seen her: she is almost still a baby."[96] Earlier in the novel, Annalena viewed Lia as a potential marriage prospect for one her sons yet she continued to view the younger woman as if incapable of having "adult" feelings and desires.

As her father would learn, Lia Giannini resisted societal expectations when she ran away. Weeks later, the parish priest informed her father and the Bilsinis that "a young girl […] initially mistaken for a twelve-year-old presented herself" to the Mother Superior of a nearby convent.[97] Lying to the older woman, Lia said that she was an orphan, persecuted, and wanted to become a novitiate. After further questioning, she confessed that she was Lia Giannini, "the daughter of industrialist Urbano Giannini of Casalotto, and she truly intended to strongly follow her religious vocation."[98] The only way Lia could claim her autonomy was to escape from home. Initially furious that she claimed to be "orphaned and persecuted," Giannini granted his permission for her to remain at the convent, declaring that Lia "was right to escape this damned world."[99] By framing her choice as the result of society, he attempted to hid his embarrassment and sense of

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[95] "'La ragazzina sarà scappata con qualche bellimbusto.' 'Sono così, le ragazze d'oggi. Ad ogni modo tutto è strano, in questa faccenda.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 230.
[96] "'No, no. Voi l'avete veduta: è quasi ancora una bambina, brutta, religiosa fine alla fine.'" Ibid., 234.
[97] "Si presentò qui, chiedendo rifugio, una giovinetta che dapprima fu scambiata per una fanciulla dodicenne." Ibid, 257.
[98] "Solo questa mattina si riebbe e confessò di chiamarsi Lia Giannini, figlia dell'industriale Signor Urbano Giannini, di Casalotto, e di intendere realmente di fortemente seguire la sua vocazione religiosa." Ibid.
[99] "'Allora dico che Lia fa bene a sfuggire questo maledetto mondo.'" Ibid., 258.

failure as a parent. As a result, the Bilsinis never saw Lia or her father again. Months later, the family received a postcard from Trieste, signed by Urbano *and* Lia Giannini. Annalena inferred that somehow he convinced his daughter to leave the convent and return home; as a result, he "brought her with him on a trip to distract her."[100] The end of Lia's story occurred off-page, and readers did not learn why she ultimately made the choice to rejoin her father. Throughout the novel, however, Deledda articulated that some young women tried to resist familial and social pressure to conform to the regime-promoted traditional family.

Like Lia, Belkıs also suffered from depression in Muhiddin's 1935 *Beauty Queen*. After being rebuked by her future mother-in-law, her father Adnan Bey started to notice both physical and affective changes in his daughter. Muhiddin wrote, "For some days, the sudden condition of his beloved child, her yellowing, pitted face, her darkened beautiful eyes, ruined her father in intolerable torture and anxiety."[101] In addition to her transformed visage, her behavior also dramatically shifted. Before the incident with her fiancé's mother, Belkıs normally played tennis, gossiped with Lamia, and rarely sat down. After the ball and this rebuke, Belkıs plunged into a melancholic and depressed state, sitting idly on a chaise lounge.[102] Adnan Bey expressed his own unhappiness and confusion over Behire's emotional and affective turn. He thought back to her childhood in which her mother, once beautiful and cheerful, became gaunt and sad. As time passed, she grew pale "like a greenhouse flower" and finally, "snuffed out like a thin candle."[103]

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[100] "Anche il Giannini non s'era lasciato più vedere e non mandava notizie. Un giorno però giunse una cartolina da Trieste, firmata da lui e dalla figlia: allora si seppe che egli convinto Lia a tornare a casa, e per distrarla la conduceva con lui in viaggio." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 261.

[101] "Kaç gündür sevimli çocuğunun birdenbire değişen halleri, sararıp solan çehresi, çukurlaşan, kararan güzel gözleri ihtiyar babayı ne tahammül edilmez bir işkence ve endişe içinde harap etmişti." Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 155.

[102] "Cevval ve sıhhatli Belkıs'ın bir şezlongun köşesine büzülerek içli, sinirli, melankolik ve mariz ruhlu bir sefahat kadını gibi pineklemesi ne acıklı bir haldı!" Ibid.

[103] "Belkıs'ın anası bir manolya kadar hassas ve nazik bir menekşesinin sapı kadar ince ve mahzun, bir sonbahar kadar solgun ve melül olan genç kadın, sevgili küçük bebeğine süt vermekten bile mahrum edilmişti. Asabı bozuk,

Following the loss of his wife, Adnan Bey decided that he would raise his daughter in a manner to avoid her mother's melancholy. Muhiddin wrote, "The young father's entire occupation consisted of preparing his beloved girl to be like a boy in body and spirit."[104] Although Adnan Bey wished to raise his daughter to be sporty and emotionally strong, his own desires were subordinated to the demands of the regime. He failed to account for the fact that Kemalist social engineering would not support his parenting choices.

Belkıs acutely felt the demands placed on her by both her father and her future mother-in-law as discussed in the section on generational change. In 1926, medical expert Dr. Cemal Zeki argued that because of the Kemalists' radical social change vis-à-vis their modernization efforts, many Turkish teenagers and young people faced mental confusion.[105] In *Beauty Queen*, Muhiddin indicated that for Belkıs, the expectations of her family members and broader community caused her depression and uncertainty. Although Adnan Bey raised his daughter outside conventional gender norms, Belkıs found herself struggling in the midst of an authoritarian social-engineering campaign that demanded she be feminine, modest, and submissive, as well as, modern. She was not supposed to enjoy the attentions to she received from men and the press at the balls she attended. Wearing a ball-gown in European styles was the aesthetic presentation the regime demanded of her, but her individual feelings of self-confidence and pride were harmful to society.

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kalbi rikkatli, bünyesi nahif olan bu genç zevce içli içli sevdiği kocasının neşeli, şakrak ve güneşli kucağında bir ser çiçeği gibi sararmıştı. Kendisine muhabbet ve merhametten başka his duymadığı bu sessiz ve ezelden dertli kadı, bir gün ince bir mum gibi söndüğü zaman Adnan Bey küçük Belkıs'ı bir erkek gibi büyümeye azmetmişti." Muhiddin, *Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 155.

[104] "Adnan Bey küçük Belkıs'ı bir erkek gibi büyümeye azmetmişti. Genç babanın bütün meşgalesi sevgili kızını manen ve maddeten bir erkek gibi hazırlamaktan ibaret kalmıştı." Ibid., 156.

[105] Shissler, "'If You Ask Me,'" 18.

Though ultimately both Lia and Belkıs would conform to the desires of the state by rejoining and perpetuating the traditional family, Deledda and Muhiddin's exploration of depressed young women emphasized the emotional and social struggles of their age cohort. They gave their characters the opportunity to carve out their own identities and strive for personal autonomy, whether by wanting to join a convent or compete in beauty pageants. When few options existed for women outside marriage and motherhood, Lia and Belkıs sought the limited available alternatives in their interwar authoritarian societies. Deledda and Muhiddin showed that young women faced conditions that would limit and prevent individual choice and autonomy. While some avenues existed for them to assert their autonomy, *Annalena Bilsini* and *Beauty Queen* highlighted how difficult and draining it was to overcome the demands of the regimes.

Young, Married, and Unhappy

During the first decade of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes, authors Derviş and Deledda constructed stories where young women believed marriage led to happiness and that they were supposed to content in their roles as wives and, more importantly, mothers. The novels *Fatma's Sin* (*Fatma'nın Günahı*, 1924) and *Annalena Bilsini* (1927) demonstrated that this outlook—one promoted by the regimes—failed to meet their expectations. Similar to Alan Duben and Cem Bahar's exploration of changing norms of love and family in late Ottoman Istanbul, historian Jonathan Dunnage also notes shifting expectations occurred in Italy. Prior to the late nineteenth century, marriages resulted out of families' determining mutual interests; now young people looked for matches based on love (*amore*).[106] Characters in novels by Deledda and Derviş emphasized that young Italian and Turkish women believed love was essential to happy

[106] Jonathan Dunnage, *Twentieth-Century Italy: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 2002), 29.

marriages. Despite these views, characters like Deledda's Gina and Derviş's Fatma recognized that the Fascist and Kemalist regimes re-enforced the differential treatment of men and women within the institution of marriage.[107] In their awareness of unequal political and emotional status, Gina and Fatma illuminated how women expressed and coped with their unhappiness in life and marriage.

Derviş's *Fatma's Sin* presented a woman betrayed by her husband, and her unhappy romantic experience caused tragedy for a friend following her example. Protagonist Fatma fulfilled the social expectation and got married to Celal, whom she believed loved her deeply. After an ill premonition, Fatma confronted her husband, and he revealed that he had loved another woman prior to their marriage and that he had recently seen her again. He cried, "I was certain that I did not love her anymore, that I had forgotten her. But I realized. I realized that time does not kill love. […] I understood that seeing her, loving her again would be my end…Fatma…You are my sole friend in life. […] Save me…Protect me!"[108] His confession wounded her deeply; for her entire life, Fatma was raised to become the wife of an adoring husband. She raged, "Since you had not loved me, did not love me, what did you want from me? Why did you steal me from my happy life? Why did you lie to me?"[109] After days of refusing to leave her room or speak to Celal, Fatma vacillated between rage and grief. Derviş wrote,

> Fatma was not upset or depressed by it. Fatma could not be moved by this voice begging her […] She was dizzy like someone who had endured a severe blow to

[107] Dunnage, *Twentieth-Century Italy*, 30.
[108] "'Ben onu artık sevmediğime ben onu unuttuğuma emindim. Fakat gördüm. Gördüm-ki seneler sevdaları öldürmüyormuş. Fatma, seneler hakiki sevdaları öldürmüyor […] Bugün anladım-ki onu görmek, onu yeniden sevmek benim felaketim olacak… Fatma… Sen hayatımda yegâne dostumsun […] Sen hayatımda yegâne tesellimsin beni ne kadar sevdiğini, beni ne çok sevdiğini bilirim… Fatma'm… Beni kurtar…Beni muhafaza et!'" Suat Derviş, *Fatma'nın Günahı* (Istanbul: Kita[b]hanesi Südi, 1924), 11. This novel was transliterated to modern Turkish and translated to English by myself, Dr. Helga Anetshofer, Xelef Botan, and Owen Green in Spring 2019 and our dual translation is currently unpublished.
[109] "'Mademki beni sevmemiştiniz, mademki beni sevmiyordunuz, benden ne istediniz? Niçin beni saadetlerimden çaldınız? Niçin bana yalan söylediniz? Cevap verseniz...bana niçin yalan söylediniz?'" Ibid., 13.

> the head. She was not resentful towards Celal […] She was not even vexed. She was now indifferent toward him, toward love, pain, and toward happiness. And this indifference did not surprise her. It was as though she did not belong to this earth on which she lived.[110]

Despite not feeling "depressed," her emotions after Celal's betrayal left Fatma feeling unmoored from reality and her psyche. Eventually, Fatma left her husband and returned to her grandfather's home where her childhood companion Zeynep still lived. She confessed her struggles to Zeynep, and both young women bonded over their romantic experiences. Derviş how overly romantic visions of married life and love presented to young women failed to wholly show that reality often did not match up with these idealization representations. After Zeynep's love interest, Kamil, left her, she spoke to Fatma about death. When thinking about her own heartbreak, Fatma confessed, "I no longer have even the will to kill myself. I have no strength or power to feel anything, to want anything."[111] Days later, Zeynep committed suicide. Novels and plays from the late Ottoman Empire frequently engaged with this theme; in many ways, Derviş's work connected to this literary tradition.[112] However, unlike many earlier novels where depictions failed to shed light on the suicidal mind, Derviş used the conversation between Fatma and Zeynep to demonstrate potentially how Zeynep came to her decision. Furthermore, Derviş focused intensely on the aftermath of Zeynep's suicide on Fatma. The titular sin was that the

[110] "Fatma müteessir, mükedder değildi. Fatma ona yalvaran bu sesle mütehassis olmuyordu. O ses kalbindeki fırtınayı canlandıramıyordu. Onu sevmiyor muydu? Anlamıyordu. Onu sevmemiş miydi? etmiyordu. Başına kuvvetli bir darbe yemiş bir insan gibi sersemdi. Celal'e karşı münfail değildi…Hatta kırgın bile değildi. Na, hayata, aşka ve sevince karşı artık lakayttı. Ve bu lakaydı onu şaşkın etmiyordu. Sanki üstünde yaşadığı bu dünyaya ait değildi." Derviş, *Fatma'nın Günahı*, 43.
[111] "'Artık şimdi kendimi öldürmeğe de hevesim kalmadı. Bir şey hissetme ki, bir şey isteme ki kuvvetim, kudretim yok.'" Ibid., 97-8.
[112] Maksudyan, "Control over Life, Control over Body," 868.

protagonist blamed herself—her own "mania" and depression—for influencing Zeynep.[113] Instead of realizing the harmful effects of the regime's gender politics, Fatma embodied regret.

In 1926, Dr. Cemal Zeki published a treatise on young girls and women and suicide in Kemalist society. He believed that young women committed this act because of a lack of guidance and argued that they should be strictly controlled in terms of reading novels, flirting, dancing, and going to and from school, all new modes of public social engagement encouraged by the regime.[114] Yet, women like Derviş provided alternative readings of the suicide spike.[115] Derviş's friend, the journalist Sabiha Sertel, wrote a series of articles and suggested that Kemalist society too strictly controlled young women. Believing in the regime's promises of "freedom and independence," they found the constraints placed on them as "unendurable and death as preferable."[116] Fatma blamed herself for Zeynep's suicide, but it was the fault of the Kemalist regime for sending ambiguous sociopolitical messages to its Turkish women. Figures like Zeynep believed that they had no alternatives in life if they did not find love and marriage. In the 1920s and 1930s, police reports and newspaper articles frequently determined "unrequited love" (*illet-i kara sevda*) as a common cause of suicide, a further means of blaming young women and their emotions.[117] Were she not a fictional character, Zeynep would be among these statistic but the causes for depression and suicide were more insidious than women's "hysteria" and emotions. Because the Kemalist regime failed to acknowledge and accept responsibility for

[113] "Onun kendi sözlerinin telkin atının nüfuzuyla nasıl bu çılgınlığı yaptığı, nasıl evden kaçtığını tasavvur ediyordu. Buna sebep olan kendi… kendi cinneti idi." Derviş, *Fatma'nın Günahı*, 115.
[114] Shissler, "'If You Ask Me,'" 18.
[115] There was an increase in suicides after 1922 in Turkey. Amongst young Muslim women, they constituted 33% of suicides; in 1925, this number rose to 40%. Maksudyan, "Control over Life, Control over Body," 868.
[116] Ibid. See also Shissler, "'If You Ask Me,'" 17-18.
[117] Maksudyan, "Control over Life, Control over Body," 871.

the social conditions it constructed, Fatma absorbed the guilt of Zeynep's suicide and would perpetuate the cycle of depression.

When introducing Gina in *Annalena Bilsini* (1927), Deledda emphasized her disconnect with the rest of the Bilsini family through physical and emotional descriptions. Unlike the blonde and pale Bilsinis, Gina was dark-haired and looked as though she hailed from the south. With the exception of her mother-in-law, Gina was surrounded by men; Annalena's uncle Dionisio lived with the family, her husband Osea, his brothers—Bardo (19), Giovanni (17), Baldo (16)—and her own two sons, Primo and Secondo.[118] Outnumbered by men, there was a potential for solidarity with her mother-in-law. Yet her emotional constitution further separated Gina from the Bilsini brood as "The young woman, tall and thin but also a little hard […] spoke little and always kept her eyelids down: and she seemed sad."[119] Deledda asked readers to consider why a woman, in the prime of her life, would feel this way.

Gina was around twenty-years-old when the Fascists came to power, and she was presumably already married to Osea. Her sons were the primary focus of Fascist age-oriented programmatic efforts, as they were born during the *Ventennio*. Gina did not entirely belong to the generation which Mussolini most distrusted; yet as a woman, the regime often failed to distinguish her from her mother-in-law. In the Fascist imaginary, she would follow Annalena's example: give birth to many children (preferably sons) and tend the home. Gina felt this viscerally: "You are only twenty-four, Gina Bilsini," she tells herself, "and already you feel older

[118] There were four Bilsini brothers at the new place [ages in parentheses]: Osea (oldest), Bardo (19), Giovanni (17) Baldo (16).
[119] "La giovine donna: alta e sottile ma un po'dura […] Ella parlava poco e teneva sempre le palpebre abbassate: e sembrava triste." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 15.

and more tired than your mother-in-law. What is the point of life?"[120] Deledda, herself closer in age to Annalena Bilsini, evocatively detailed Gina's weariness. Gina felt defective, as if something were wrong with her because she felt *old* and tired. There was an implicit sense of failure and discouragement that Gina was doing something wrong because she did not feel young.

To question the purpose of one's life represented a very individualistic notion, defiant of the regime's dictates and demands. Gina's unhappiness was a result of a lack of emotional connection to those around her. Deledda wrote, "Nobody in the family knew her dreams, and she did not even try to examine them."[121] By burying her feelings, Gina was unable to be herself. When she finally admitted her hopes and aspirations, the weight of her confusion, exhaustion, and unhappiness was revealed: "What is truly beautiful in the world is love, but it is often like wealth, it is useless."[122] The futility of love weighed upon Gina, a symptom of her weariness, sadness, and premature ageing. When nearing the age of marriage, Gina believed love would free her from the constraints of her mother. She initially viewed marriage to Osea Bilsini as an escape and a way to claim her self-autonomy. Now older and hardened, Gina's mind filled with regret: regret for choosing the wrong man, regret for believing love led to freedom. Instead, her marriage caused Gina frustration and hostility. From a very material and physical standpoint, her labors of being a wife, mother, and daughter-in-law aged her, and she thought, "Every day I make the men's beds, sweep the floors, wash, cook, and this making polenta every night, *every*

[120] "'Ventiquattro sono pure i tuoi anni, Gina Bilsini,' ella diceva a sé stessa, 'e già ti senti più vecchia e stanca di tua suocera. A che serve la mia vita?'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 54.
[121] "Nessuno sapeva di questi suoi sogni e neppure lei cercava di approfondirli." Ibid., 53.
[122] "Quello che ch'è di veramente bello, nel mondo, è l'amore: ma anch'esso spesse volte è come la ricchezza; non serve a niente." Ibid., 54.

night. […] I *hate* these things."[123] The repetition of "every night" stressed the temporality of Gina's condition. Without even new meals to cook, Gina felt an implicit misery that made her feel both old and ageless, that change will never happen. Because the Fascist regime sought its eternal perpetuation, it expected women citizen-subjects to conform with routine behaviors.

"Sono vecchia": Annalena, the Middle-Aged Heroine

When Deledda began writing *Annalena Bilsini* – a novel about a family working the land between Mantua and Cremona – in 1925, she described the plot as focusing on "a constant desire for moral and social elevation. The central figure is the mother, still young […] a widow of many years, attached to the family by a love that conquers every other passion. A sentimental plot, that at times borders on tragic, naturally guides the novel."[124] It was her first novel published after her Nobel Prize win, and contemporary critics considered it a masterpiece. That the titular protagonist was a forty-six-year-old woman was and remains revolutionary. Rarely are women beyond the maternal period or those in the post-menopausal stage the focus of novels, even in contemporary fiction produced in neoliberal democratic societies. Deledda's protagonist lived in a society that emphasized youth above all other age cohorts and generations. While the regime would view Annalena's experiences and emotions immaterial, Deledda forced her readers to consider her protagonist's struggles in their own contemporary time.

The novel's opening line introduced readers to its central characters: "There was a numerous family: five male sons, the mother widowed."[125] Annalena Bilsini was a woman with

[123] "'Tutti i santi giorni rifare i letti degli uomini, scopare, lavare, cucire: e quest'accidente di polenta tutte le sere, tutte le sere, tutte quante Dio ne ha create! Io odio queste cose.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 55. Emphasis mine.
[124] Stanis Ruinas, *Scrittrici e scribacchine d'oggi* (Rome: Casa editrice Accademia, 1930), 46.
[125] "Era una famiglia numerosa: cinque figli maschi, la madre vedova." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 1.

numerous life experiences, struggles, and pains. While en route to their new farm, Annalena considered her past, "This desire, of far and unknown places, was perhaps borne from the fact that she had neither experienced nor enjoyed love. Annalena

> married for interests at sixteen-years-old, to an already old man ("*sposata per interesse, a sedici anni, ad un uomo già anziano*"), of marriage she had only known disgust and the pain and joy of motherhood. A sting of desire then remained in her blood, a germ unknown to herself, of anxiety and sadness.[126]

Annalena acutely felt regret for her younger self, the one who married an already old man for reasons not romantic. *Le interesse* can mean "appeal," "allure," or it can also mean "profit." In late nineteenth-century Italy, arranged marriages were not uncommon.[127] Since Annalena described her life as one never experiencing love, it was more likely her marriage was economically advantageous for her family.

The character of Annalena challenged elements of the contemporary western European romance genre and conceptions of the "old maid"—a concept underexplored within Mediterranean historical and literary studies. In Victorian Britain, medical and political discourse framed women's destiny as "the maternal period," and once a woman entered into menopause, she was "devoid of purpose."[128] There were fears that women beyond the maternal period could degenerate as older women, lose their "femininity," and become more "masculine," potentially sexually rapacious.[129] In this conceptualization, women whose sexuality was no longer linked to

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[126] "Questo desiderio, di luoghi lontani e non conosciuti, nasceva forse in lei dal fatto ch'ella non aveva mai provato né goduto l'amore. Sposata per interesse, a sedici anni, ad un uomo già anziano, del matrimonio ella non aveva conosciuto che le ripugnanze, e il dolore e la gioia della maternità. Le rimaneva quindi nel sangue un pungiglione di desiderio, un germe ignoto a lei stessa di inquietudine e di tristezza." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 7.
[127] Dunnage, *Twentieth Century Italy*, 29-30.
[128] It is unclear if Annalena Bilsini was a post-menopausal woman but was definitely beyond the maternal period. Jeanette King, *Discourses of Ageing in Fiction and Feminism: The Invisible Woman* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 9.
[129] Ibid., 11-12.

procreation ostensibly could engage in sex like men as they no longer had the threat of pregnancy.

Deledda used Annalena to explore post-maternal life and demonstrated that women could chose to diminish their femininity as a way to protect themselves and their families. She wrote, Annalena "still had beautiful hair, a bright chestnut color […] even her skin was white and youthful; she knew it, but she did not take care of it; on the contrary, she tried to cover herself, to dress herself as an old woman, to impose more respect on her children and perhaps on herself."[130] To be an old woman was the need to "render her body invisible, to make herself an object of disgust, and to signal that her body was deteriorating."[131] Annalena knew that her appearance presented a myriad of dangers: though in the post-maternal stage of her life, her beauty could potentially indicate to men that she was sexually available. Because both regimes did not call upon older women like Annalena or Belkıs's future mother-in-law (i.e. women beyond the maternal period), in many ways, they had fewer responsibilities to the state. In the Fascist context, one instance where Annalena could have been directly encouraged by the state for her participation was the 1935 Day of Faith (*Giornata della fede*). On 18 December, the regime asked Italian women to "symbolically" marry the nation and donate their gold wedding rings in order to help fund the war effort in Ethiopia.[132] Prior to this event, however, the regimes in both Italy and Turkey expected older women to maintain their traditional life patterns as

[130] "Aveva ancora dei bellissimi capelli, d'un colore castano acceso [….] anche le sue carni erano bianche e giovanili; ella lo sapeva, ma non se ne curava, anzi cercava di coprirsi, di camuffarsi da vecchia, per imporre più rispetto ai suoi figli e forse di sé a sé stessa." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 46.
[131] King, *Discourses of Ageing*, xiii.
[132] Perry Willson, "Empire, Gender and the 'Home Front' in Fascist Italy," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 4 (2007): 489.

wives, mothers, and grandmothers and did not target them in the way they did with younger women in their prime reproductive years.

Though Annalena coded herself as an old woman, her efforts proved unsuccessful. Upon meeting Annalena, the family's landlord Urbano Giannini inquired into the matriarch's chronological age to which she replied, "I am old."[133] Objectifying her body and appearance, he dismissed her answer, telling her that she was very young. His flirtatious words, ignoring Annalena's concerns, caused an affective response: "She frowned because she had never allowed anyone to give her personal compliments, yet found herself a girl [*fanciulla*] when the masculine desire hit her."[134] Giannini's attentions and sweet words made Annalena feel younger, a mental and emotional regression, of which she was not proud. Deledda continued, "And she, who did not yet have the consciousness of what that desire inferred, felt both frightened and moved."[135] Annalena's simultaneous fear and desire showed the clear influence of her community's socialized containment of older women. As a result of being beyond the maternal period, it was dangerous and *wrong* for her to feel this way; she had been conditioned by society to be afraid and ashamed of her sexuality.

When Annalena's general declarations of her being "old" failed to deter Urbano, she attempted to use her chronological years as an indicator that his "carnal" desires could not be sated. Deledda revealed that Urbano was forty, Annalenna forty-three.[136] Historically, Italian

[133] "'Quanti anni hai?' 'Sono vecchia.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 127.
[134] "Ella aggrottò le ciglia, poiché non permetteva a nessuno di farle complimenti personali; eppure si ritrovò fanciulla, quando il desiderio maschile la investiva." Ibid., 128.
[135] "E lei, che non aveva ancora la coscienza di quello che il desiderio conclude, se ne sentiva impaurita e trasportata assieme." Ibid.
[136] "Infine, le pareva, adesso, di piacere carnalmente al padrone, e che egli fosse tornado solo per rivederla […] Quarant'anni egli aveva; tre meno di lei, ma ne dimostrava a volte di più, a volte di meno." Ibid., 128-31.

widows over forty "seldom remarried, especially if they had children."[137] Furthermore, Annalena was in late middle-age by the standard of her time. By 1931 in Fascist Italy, the life expectancy was 53.8 years for men and 56 years for women.[138] After Giannini told her that he wanted them to be alone together, Annalena sought to diffuse his desire by calling him a "boy," but had to hide her youthful, blushing cheeks. He pressed her again, declaring, "I do not want you as a friend but as a lover." Annalena attempts to both de-sexualize herself and appeal to social propriety. Deledda wrote, "She lifted her face, proud and sad. 'Urbano, you forget that I am a grandmother. What would the boys say if they heard us?'"[139] When he ignored her remonstrations, she tried to use her familial status, another signifier of her "advanced" years to implore him to stop. By invoking her sons and imagining what they would say, she also suggested that it would be embarrassing for her as an older woman to be discovered in an amorous position. Annalena recognized the danger of her position and wanted to minimize her sexual potential through her maternal status.

In addition to tempering her sexuality vis-à-vis her age, Annalena also sought to protect her status as the matriarch of her family. With Giannini as her family farm's landlord, she had to carefully consider their interactions because of the power imbalance, one that the man was all too eager to ignore. Annalena said that if anyone should love, it should be Giannini's only daughter Lia and one of her eligible sons, signifying that love by her definition was productive (i.e. leading to marriage). Yet in seeing his carnal "weakness," she discovered a power that she did

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[137] Stanislao Mazzoni, et al, "Widowhood and Remarriage in Sardinia, Alghero, 1866-1925," *Population* 68, no. 2 (2013): 240.
[138] Ginsborg, *Family Politics*, 151.
[139] "'Voglio il vero bene, l'amore. Ti voglio non come amica, ma come amante.' […] Ella sollevò il viso, fiera e triste. 'Urbano, dimentichi che io sono nonna. Che direbbero i ragazzi se ci sentissero?'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 153.

not expect to have: "Her calculations as a mother rose again through her love as a woman […] She thought that it would be enough to surrender a little, to abandon herself to his desire, to make him an instrument of her ambition."[140] In many ways, the older woman faced few good options; she could have rejected her landlord and faced potential social/financial consequences, or she could give into her own desires for her own benefit. Ultimately, Annalena gave herself to Giannini's senseless kisses and "lost consciousness of her self."[141] Deledda showed that her protagonist had sexual and romantic desires, irrespective of her chronological age.

Yet after their physical encounter, Annalena felt like she lost something. Deledda wrote, "She had returned to her home, reentering like a thief."[142] Conditioned by society, politics, and faith, Annalena believed she had transgressed and reverted to a less mature status. She had once believed herself to be "the strong woman of the Bible" but now felt reduced to "the little girl [*la femminuccia*] desirous of love."[143] As a result of her perceived age regression and moral transgression, Annalena thought that now Giannini would find her weak like so many other women and worse, he would not think highly of her any longer.[144] By acting upon her physical and emotional desires, something Annalena perceived as an action only meant for or done by much younger women, she believed she lost the honor and dignity her age-status bestowed. Unlike Gina, Lia, and Isabella, societal expectations for women belonging to Annalena's age

[140] "Si fermò spaventata: perché si accorgeva che davanti alla debolezza dell'uomo, i suoi calcoli di madre risorgevano attraverso il suo amore di donna. E non era meglio così? No, non era meglio […] pensava che bastava cedere un poco, abbandonarsi anche lei al suo desiderio, per fare di lui uno strumento della sua ambizione." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 153.
[141] "Per tentare di liberarsi ella rispose un sommesso e tremulo 'si'; ma come se tutta l'anima sua fosse penetrate per l'orecchio in quella dell'uomo, si sentì presa dal turbine dei baci insensate di lui, e perdette la coscienza di sé stessa." Ibid., 154.
[142] "Ella era ritornata nella sua casa rientrandovi come un ladro." Ibid.
[143] "E adesso, ecco, non più la donna forte della Bibbia, ma la femminuccia desiderosa d'amore, riviveva in lei." Ibid., 154-5.
[144] "Trovandola debole come tante altre donne, egli forse non la stimava più, ella pensava." Ibid., 155.

cohort were less defined and regulated. Since she belonged to a generation that experienced life before the Fascists, Annalena would never be considered a prized citizen because of both her age *and* her gender. The rules governed by religion and state—both male-dominated institutions—forced Annalena to absorb the brunt of the guilt in an extramarital, amorous affair.

Conclusion

Age and gender compounded an individual's experience with the Fascist and Kemalist regimes. Their emphasis on youth and the silo-ing of chronological age cohorts created ambiguity and conflict amongst different generations of women. Novels by Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin demonstrated that age produced distinct emotional and affective outcomes – often negative – for women in these interwar societies. Age almost as much as gender defined an individual's identity. At the onset of the regimes, the protagonists in *Behire's Suitors* and *A Flower that did not bloom* highlighted that young women would face intense social pressures for their conformity to the regime's gender politics. As Halide Edip, Deledda, and Muhiddin demonstrated, generational conflict became a mode of social engineering when the regimes strengthened their power and dictated specific notions of womanhood. Lia in *Annalena Bilsini* and Belkıs of *Beauty Queen* exhibited depression that was exacerbated by regimes' demands; their family, acquaintances, and society writ large ostracized and critiqued young women for being unhappy. Deledda's *Annalena Bilsini* and Derviş's *Fatma's Sin* depicted younger women who felt betrayed by the promoted notion of marriage as a means for happiness. Lastly, Annalena Bilsini, a revolutionary protagonist because of her age, demonstrated that older women not wanted by the regime still felt controlled by age-defined behaviors. Because the Fascist and Kemalist regimes sought to subordinate the individual to the collective, the studied

novels in this chapter expressed that women at all stages of life struggled with their agency and self-autonomy in the interwar period.

Chapter 5: Motherhood

As a result of the psychological and political defeats of the First World War, geopolitical and demographic strength presented major concerns to the emergent Fascist and Kemalist regimes. Though the idea of women serving the nation vis-à-vis motherhood was not new in either context, the ways in which the state theorized, constructed, and manipulated women's social roles were. We see this shift especially in how these demands for women's reproductive capacities, or "responsibilities," in the eyes of the regimes – contradicted or complicated other messages sent to women citizen-subjects. Unlike under previous governments where women were encouraged to raise good citizens, the Fascists and Kemalists instituted pro-natalist policies, articulating that by the mid-1920s, mothers needed to bear numerous new citizen-subjects. Motherhood was never about the mother, but about the child and its future/present relationship and responsibilities to the nation. Both authoritarian regimes emphasized that women's civic responsibility was to have children for the perpetuation of the nation-state rather than by individual choice.[1] In the numerous studies on Fascist demographics, historians have demonstrated, however, Mussolini's battle for births largely failed.[2] In the Kemalist context, the urban, educated women—the primary targets of the regime's modernization efforts—were not the ones giving birth to the desired eight, ten, twelve children.

Within gender history, there are many studies on women as "mothers of the nation," yet they often focus primarily upon state-mediated, high political sources. This chapter is an

[1] Idea from D. Fatma Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 102.
[2] See David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Lauren E. Forcucci, "Battle for Births: The Fascist Pro-natalist Campaign in Italy 1925 to 1938," *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 10, no. 1 (2010): 4-13.

emotional exploration into motherhood. Writing within an atmosphere of pro-natalist rhetoric and policy, novels by Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Halide Edip, Maria Messina and Nezihe Muhiddin emphasized the personal. They constructed motherhood as an affective constellation: women characters in their novels all had different emotional reactions to their state-dictated reproductive responsibilities and expressed complicated feelings toward motherhood. Additionally, as the regimes intensified their calls for prolific births, these fictional motherhood plots created space for empathy in instances where their women readers might have felt trapped, apathetic, or disheartened by the reduction of their value to their biological capacities. The authors' novels served potential reference points for their readers to articulate their own feelings about motherhood and its complexities. With their novels' focus on the individual and emotional experience of motherhood, the authors critiqued the regimes' pro-natalist demands.

Methodology

There are many archival sources available on motherhood. The chapter will use sources, such as speeches from the dictators, laws and policy, and programs from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) congresses of 1923, 1926, and 1929 indicate the ways in which Turkish and Italian feminists engaged the concept and institution of motherhood as a reason for social equality. The novels are put in conversation with these sources to explore how the individual responded to authoritarian policies. Where Halide Edip would articulate her views in concert with the regime, Aleramo, Deledda, Messina, and Muhiddin used ambivalence and unhappiness towards motherhood to reflect upon and criticize the continued political and social subordination of Italian and Turkish women by Fascist and Kemalist regimes. The chapter first explores how the regimes did not immediately adopt or promote pro-natalist agendas and

analyzes Halide Edip's *The Shirt of Flame* (1923) and Maria Messina's *A Flower that did not bloom* (*Un fiore che non fiorì*, 1923) to assess attitudes towards children and maternity in the first part of the 1920s. The next section evaluates works by Grazia Deledda and Nezihe Muhiddin published when the regimes instituted their rhetoric about prolific motherhood. Instead of framing childbirth as a patriotic duty, the authors presented hopes for newborn children framed in the personal, emotional experience. Finally, the chapter assesses novels from the first half of the 1930s—Aleramo's *The Whip* (*Il frustino*, 1932) and Muhiddin's *Beauty Queen* (*Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 1935)—to demonstrate how women articulated their relationship to motherhood after the regimes made the pro-natalist discourse and policy the new normal.

Instrumentalization of Women

Through their pro-natalist rhetoric and policies, the regimes intensified the need for prolific childbirth and encouraged women's engagement with politics in very specific ways. Sociologist Nilüfer Göle wrote that within the Kemalist regime's civilizing mission, women and their bodily visibility (i.e. no veils and European dress) played a key role in asserting and proving its Western and modern status.[3] As a result, the regime passed significant legislation that seemingly presented the narrative that Mustafa Kemal "championed women's rights" but still affirmed women's primary responsibilities to the nation as being through childbirth.[4] In the Fascist context, "Women's procreative role […] defined every aspect of their social being."[5] Reading Italian and Turkish women's novels alongside Fascist and Kemalist pro-natalist policies

[3] Göle quoted in Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 78.
[4] Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 98.
[5] Victoria DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 44.

reveals that Mustafa Kemal, like Benito Mussolini, instrumentalized women's public presence and bodies not for their own rights and autonomy but for the perpetuation of the nation vis-à-vis childbirth.

Novels by Deledda, Messina, Muhiddin, and Aleramo focused on how women's emotions and affective responses to pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood frequently contrasted with the regimes' desires for future loyal citizen-subjects. In both contexts, scholars generally agree that these calls for prolific births did not materialize into the desired major population increases. While women had children in this atmosphere of the "battle for births," the studied authors suggested that many mothers frequently constructed their reproductive capacities in modes contradictory to the regimes' desires. Though writing about Fascist Italy, historian Victoria DeGrazia's assessment of the regime's maternal politics: the regimes "promoted a novel politics around maternity, which recognized women as new political subjects, yet granted them few real privileges and burdened them with additional duties."[6] Similar attitudes prevailed in Kemalist Turkey. DeGrazia notes that it is difficult for historians to pinpoint women's personal motivations in limiting childbearing.[7] As a result, this chapter turns to the popular culture record to explore how these women authors negotiated, imagined, and framed the effects of the regimes' population desires for the individual Italian and Turkish woman. Aleramo, Deledda, Messina, and Muhiddin expressed dissent by framing of pregnancy through individual emotional experiences. Where the regimes' ideologies demanded the subordination of the individual to the collective, the authors' novels articulated that women continued to frame the experience of pregnancy and motherhood in personal terms.

[6] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 45.
[7] Ibid.

Motherhood Imagined by Men

In transitioning from Liberal Italy and the Ottoman Empire to authoritarian states, the Fascists and Kemalists inherited two similar fertility cultures: in Italy, the more urban north and central regions with lower birthrates versus the rural south with more births, and for Turkey, the cities of Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara in contrast to the Anatolian countryside.[8] In their modernizing and pro-natalist missions, the regimes promoted new practices that "interfered with old customs, and stigmatized traditional practices […] mothers of all classes were thus made to feel inadequate, anxious, and dependent."[9] Both Italian and Turkish women found themselves in a bind; the regimes wanted them to continue traditional gender roles as mothers, but they were not encouraged to follow their own instincts.[10]

In their first years of governance, neither the Fascist nor Kemalist regimes actively engaged with pro-natalist discourse. The First World War in post-Ottoman Anatolia produced real demographic concerns as a result of more than a decade of warfare and loss of lives in battle and on the home front. As a result, the new Republic decided to focus on the protection of children as opposed to immediately calling for pro-natalism. A key continuity from the late Ottoman era into the new republic was the Children's Protection Society (HEC, *Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti*). Founded in 1917, this group worked simultaneously to help orphaned children and to disseminate pro-state ideology to inculcate youth loyalty to the Ottoman nation and the CUP

[8] David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 103.
[9] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 60.
[10] See Diana Garvin, "Taylorist Breastfeeding in Rationalist Clinics: Constructing Industrial Motherhood in Fascist Italy," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 3 (2015): 655-74, DOI: 10.1086/680196; Ayça Alemdaroğlu, "Politics of the Body and Eugenic Discourse in Early Republican Turkey," *Body & Society* 11, n. 3 (2005): 61-76, DOI: 10.1177/1357034X05056191; and Yael Navoro-Yaşın, "Evde Taylorizm: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk yıllarında evişinin rasyonelleşmesi (1928-1940)," *Toplum Bilimi* 84 (2000): 51-74.

regime.[11] The HEC's efforts intensified in the early years of the Kemalist regime when it became a *de facto* organ of the state.[12] By the end of the War of Independence, Anatolia was intensely depopulated, declining by 20 percent. Nearly 2.5 million Anatolian Muslims died, in addition to 600,000-800 Armenians (because of the genocide) and up to 30,000 Greeks. In comparison to France, which had the greatest mortality during the First World War, Anatolia's population decline was 20 times as high.[13]

As a result, the Kemalists emphasized anew the importance of children as the future of the nation and called on all citizens to protect them. In June 1921, members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly coopted HEC, and the Ankara branch leaders were among the most influential men in national politics: Raûf [Orbay] (Prime Minister of the Grand National Assembly); Dr. Adnan [Adıvar]; Dr. Fua[t] [Umay]; and Yunus Nadi [Abalıoğlu] (editor of *Cumhuriyet*).[14] While the HEC continued to provide services to orphans, the move to Ankara shifted attention toward children's health and welfare more broadly. Already responsible for crafting national legislation and budgets, these board members, along with President Mustafa Kemal and the rest of the national assembly, promised to financially support organizations that promoted childcare assistance.[15] Historian Hale Yılmaz emphasizes that while the HEC was not state-run, by the 1930s it belonged to the corporatist framework of the regime and received state

[11] Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 185.
[12] See Kara A. Peruccio, "Anavatandaşlar: Motherhood and Kemalist Modernity in *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu*, 1926-1936" (Unpublished MA thesis: University of Chicago, 2014).
[13] Only Serbia had greater population loss in the entire war. Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History, Third Edition* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 163-5.
[14] Makbule Sarıkaya, "Cumhuriyet'in Yıllarında Bir Sosyal Hizmet Kurumu: Türkiye Himaye-i Etfal Cemiyeti," *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 34 (2007): 323.
[15] Kathryn Libal, ""The Children's Protection Society: Nationalizing Child Welfare in Early Republican Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 23 (2000): 58. Libal notes that just like in Fascist Italy, the Kemalist government began giving prolific mothers monetary rewards as part of the Law on Public Hygiene passed in April 1930. See Kathryn Libal, "National Futures: The Child Question in Early Republican Turkey," (PhD Dissertation: University of Washington, 2001), 81.

funds.[16] As a result the HEC would also provide education and research on issues pertaining to the health and development of children.

Conversely, it took the Fascist regime several years before setting up official parameters for supporting child welfare. While there were child-assistance programs already in place, the regime passed Law n. 2277 on 10 December 1925, establishing *L'opera nazionale della maternità ed infanzia* (ONMI, National Agency for Maternity and Infancy). The government modeled this entity on the Belgian National Agency for Children, founded in 1919. Italy lagged behind not only Belgium and Turkey, but also Norway (1915) and France (1921) for official child welfare organizations. In terms of laws focusing on maternity and early childhood care, the nation trailed Great Britain (1918), the United States (1921), Germany (1922), and Denmark (1922).[17] Unlike the Turkish HEC, ONMI was a *de jure* extension of the regime, part of what DeGrazia calls "an alphabet soup" of state agencies established to give welfare to families.[18] Although ONMI started after HEC and initially focused its efforts on supporting orphans, it also aided unwed mothers, impoverished widows, and married women without spousal support.

For both regimes, the call for prolific births occurred only after the transition towards dictatorial rule in 1925. In 1927, the Turkish census found the population at nearly 13 million people: 51.8 percent female, 48.2 percent male.[19] Further data frightened the Kemalist regime, as the census found unmarried citizens outnumbering those who were married. Articles published across various journalistic media highlighted the disadvantages of being single, with some

[16] Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 187.
[17] Michele Minesso, *Stato e infanzia nell'Italia contemporanea: Original, sviluppo e fine dell'Onmi 1925-1975* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007), 49-50.
[18] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 81.
[19] D. Fatma Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s* (Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 100.

articles trying to show that "single people committed more crimes than married individuals."[20] The regime also stoked fears of European expansionism and colonialism, articulating that without a population increase, nearby nations with their own "growing populations would not allow Turks to live in this large area [Anatolia]."[21] Not only would births protect the newly established republic from a repeat of the traumas of the First World War and the War of Independence and protect the nation through a larger population.

In demanding prolific births, the Fascists and Kemalists wanted women to embrace the role of the happy wife and mother. According to DeGrazia, "the perfect fascist woman was a remarkable new hybrid: she served her family's every need, yet was also zealously responsive to the state's interests."[22] Italian historian Maria Sophia Quine wrote, "Fascism's family policy was the basis of an agenda for a conservative modernization […] in that it aspired both to protect the family and politicize its functions."[23] This sense of reform in a traditional key—women maintaining their marital and reproductive responsibilities—was also found in Kemalist society for Turkish women. Both regimes dragged the private sphere into public political discourse to a heightened degree. Similarly, the Kemalist regime characterized the nation's ideal woman with regards to her self-abnegation and support of the nation's messages. In demanding the individual to subordinate herself to the collective, she needed to want only the things the regime dictated of her.

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[20] Türe, *Facts and Fantasies*, 100.
[21] Ibid.
[22] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 77.
[23] Maria Sophia Quine quoted in Elisabetta Vezzosi, "Maternalism in a Paternalist State: The National Organization for the Protection of Motherhood and Infancy in Fascist Italy," in *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Marian van der Klein, et al (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 190.

Motherhood and Women's Rights in the Authoritarian Mediterranean

Even at the outset of the regimes, many Italian and Turkish women's suffrage proponents frequently used motherhood as a means to demand sociopolitical equality. As mentioned in chapter 2, both the Fascists and Kemalists initially supported increasing women's sociopolitical status before coming to power. Believing these false promises, women's groups continued to link their capacity for motherhood to their demands for the franchise. Throughout the 1920s, international women's suffrage activists would reaffirm their commitment to the care of children—closely in line with the regimes' *de facto* and *de jure* efforts—to demand equality.

By advocating for suffrage vis-à-vis maternal rights and status, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) sought to link women's reproductive capacities to modernization efforts. At the 1923 IWSA Congress held in Rome, Mussolini delivered a speech "reaffirming" his support for women's equality. In response to the dictator, outgoing president Carrie Chapman Catt's address declared, "Men and nations are not thinking the same thoughts about women as before. It is an entirely new and different world for women."[24] The Committee on the Economic Status of the Wife and Mother and Children focused on the rights of children (legitimate and illegitimate) and argued that a wife possessed the right to share her husband's income. The Congress adopted the resolution that "married women who are bringing up children, who are the future citizens of the States, are doing work of importance to the community as great as those men and women who are producing material wealth or giving remunerated services of hand and brain."[25] Two years later, the regime approved the Acerbo Law, which granted female suffrage

[24] The International Woman Suffrage Alliance, *Report of Ninth Congress: Rome, Italy, May 12th to 19th 1923*, 29, 2IAW/1/C/04, Records of the International Alliance of Women – Administrative records: Triennial Congress Reports and Associated Papers, Ninth Congress-Rome, The Women's Library at the London School of Economics.
[25] Ibid., 74.

only in administrative elections (i.e. local vote) and carefully stipulated which women could vote. In line with the IWSA's arguments for suffrages, the law gave the franchise to women who were mothers and widows of war dead *or* were heads of families *or* decorated for special services to Italy, *or* had a degree, *or* paid local taxes *and* could read and write.[26] In short, the Italian women gaining voting rights needed to prove their maternal, marital, and educational qualifications. Though the regime granted the franchise to some women, the regime ended all voting in 1926. Historian Alexander De Grand mentions that "one writer noted that there was finally equality between the sexes now that both were made to be disenfranchised."[27] Despite Italian and international women's activism often using rhetoric of maternity to advocate for rights, Mussolini's regime refused to allow referenda and dissent on his politics by eliminating elections.

In some ways, the one-party experience in Kemalist Turkey represented another form of disenfranchisement for both Turkish men and women. Even prior to the establishment of the Turkish nation-state, Mustafa Kemal and male elites refused to recognize women's rights. On June 15, 1923, Muhiddin and other Turkish women advocating for women's elevation in Turkish society established the Women's People's Party (KHF, *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası*). Muhiddin and her peers believed that there was room for such an organization to exist within the new political and social landscape of the nascent Republic. The government refused to grant permission for the establishment of the party.[28] Undeterred, the KHF in 1924 shifted to the Turkish Women's

[26] Sabina Donati, *A Political History of National Citizenship and Identity in Italy, 1861-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 170.
[27] Alexander De Grand, "Women under Italian Fascism," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 4 (1976): 955.
[28] Zafer Toprak offers the suggestion that simply, the KHF's name too strongly resembled the name of the People's Party, and the government did not want to permit its existence. Zihnioğlu for her part suggests that Mustafa Kemal and his peers found the organization and its program not convenient for their politics. Yaprak Zihnioğlu*, Kadınsız İnkilap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003), 147.

Union (TKB, *Türk Kadın Birliği*), a voluntary association that sought to be more "inclusive" in its language and membership. Every Turkish and Muslim woman who desired the social elevation of womanhood were eligible to become members. Additionally, men who subscribed to the organization's lofty ideals were also welcome to join.[29] Still, the regime and other elite men were generally reluctant to support the TKB and more broadly, the subject of women's rights.[30]

Despite scholars frequently highlighting its revolutionary and seeming "pro-women's equality" status, the Turkish Civil Code adopted in February 1926 illustrated the ambiguity and uncertainty of the regime towards women's equality. Though outlawing polygyny and enshrining women's equality in terms of inheritance and divorce, the Civil Code explicitly maintained women's government-preferred role as wives and implicitly as mothers.[31] Article 152/1 designated the husband as head of the household and 152/2 granted him the privilege of selecting the family's place of residence. Although the Kemalist regime would encourage women's professional participation, article 152/2 also required that men financially provide for the family. Both officially and unofficially, the wife remained secondary to her husband, as article 154 declared him the legal representative of the marital union.[32] The language of the Civil Code implied or assumed that women would get married. Though elements of the Turkish Civil Code

[29] Zihnioğlu*, Kadınsız İnkilap*, 150-1. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu in *Recovering Armenia* discusses the TKB's invitation of membership to Hayganush Mark of the Armenian women's periodical *Hay Gin* in 1927 and the TKB's somewhat fraught relationship with Turkish female citizens who were not Muslim. See Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).
[30] Zihnioğlu devotes a whole section to the anti-feminism of Yunus Nadi as it appeared on the pages of his newspaper, *Cumhuriyet.* See Ibid., 158-65.
[31] For a breakdown of the articles that maintained marital authority for men, see Umut Özsu, "'Receiving' the Swiss Civil Code: translating authority in early republican Turkey," *International Journal of Law in Context* 6, no. 1 (2010): 63-89.
[32] Yesim Arat, "The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 105.

improved life for women (i.e. the increased age of marriage), overall, it fundamentally upheld men's privilege and power.

Save the Children: Martyrdom and the Turkish Nationalist Movement

Of the authors studied in this dissertation, Halide Edip was the most connected to the regime at its onset. In her 1923 novel *The Shirt of Flame*, Halide Edip explored the dimensions of the loss of children and stressed that the state and its citizens should never forget the pain and trauma of recent warfare. Although Halide Edip was not a supporter of suffrage, she articulated that women belonged in the national project because they were mothers. Because she supported the regime's nationalist mission during its first years, *The Shirt of Flame* highlights the radical nature of some of the other Italian and Turkish novels written at a distance from the state. In framing the loss of Ayşe's son Hasan as a martyrdom, Halide Edip closely aligned with the regime's politics of youth and child protection. As a result, her novel simultaneously supported the state and resisted patriarchal notions that women belonged firmly at home, away from the frontlines.

In this discussion of child welfare in the early Turkish Republic, it is important to note Halide Edip's problematic association with orphanages for Armenian children during the First World War. Ayşe's grief at the loss of her son and her commitment to serving the cause also harkened back to Halide Edip's own experiences with child welfare during the First World War. Although she purportedly spoke out against the deportations of Armenians in 1916, she still accepted Cemal Pasha's invitation to establish girls' schools and an orphanage for Armenian,

Kurdish, and Turkish children in Beirut and Damascus.[33] Her memoir reflects this duality of her politics. As a staunch nationalist, she believed that Arabs, Armenians, and Kurds were lesser "races" than the Turks but simultaneously expressed deep compassion for the suffering of children.[34] Still, the trauma of the orphanage experience for Armenian children cannot be ignored. Historian Keith David Watenpaugh writes that Halide Edip's efforts were "similar to what nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social reformers in the United States and Canada sought to accomplish with American Indian boarding schools."[35] Both the perpetuation of genocide through the orphanages and Hasan's martyrdom articulated that children were the ultimate collateral damage in the First World War and War of Independence. By the latter's end, there were an estimated 90,000 Turkish orphans in Anatolia.[36] Halide Edip certainly functioned within the nationalist civilizing mission, but it is also important to recognize her commitment to child welfare.

Though her protagonist was the grieving mother of a martyred son, Halide Edip subverted men's expectations for women and encouraged women's participation in the national political effort. In this way, Halide Edip demonstrated that motherhood and responsibilities to children were a way for women to gain inclusion in the public, not dissimilar to how international suffrage groups framed maternalism as a means for advocating for equality. However, Mustafa Kemal and the men-only government (of which Halide Edip's own husband was a member) refused to grant women's suffrage.

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[33] Elizabeth F. Thompson does not provide a citation for the 1916 Turkish Hearth lecture against the deportations. See Thompson, *Justice Interrupted: The Struggle for Constitutional Government in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 103.
[34] Ibid. 104
[35] Keith David Watenbough, "Introduction," in Karnig Panian, *Goodbye, Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), xii.
[36] Libal, "National Futures," 205.

Though she would eventually write a memoir called *The Turkish Ordeal* (published in 1928), Halide Edip primarily turned to the novel as a means of analyzing and promoting her own vision of the Turkish national future in the waning days of the war. Using the protagonist of Ayşe, she veiled herself within a semiautobiographical narrative of her own experiences as a mother and active participant during the Turkish War of Independence. While Halide Edip's two sons survived the war, Ayşe lost her son at the age of five. At the start of *The Shirt of Flame*, Ayse's Istanbulite relatives received news that their Izmir-based kin sought to escape the Aegean frontline; however, Ayşe's son Hasan had a case of the measles, which delayed the family's retreat. Shortly thereafter, her cousin Peyami and his mother received news of the Greek invasion of Izmir with details of personal tragedy: "Moukbil Bey [Ayşe's husband] has been torn to pieces by the Greeks and his little boy Hasan has been shot. Ayşe Hanum is wounded and has been taken refuge in an Italian family."[37] Upon hearing the sad news, family friend Ihsan lamented, "The poor baby martyr."[38]

Through Hasan's martyrdom, Halide Edip's personal stand-in Ayşe incited others join the nationalist (and pro-child) cause. The tragic death and loss of the child served as Halide Edip's reframing of martyrological stories for the twentieth century. Martyrologies, or stories about the martyrdom of an individual or individuals, have historically functioned as a form of propaganda designed to inspire audiences to support and promote a cause with all available resources.[39] From the Spartans of Ancient Greece to the First World War, martyrologies frequently relied upon the ability of the martyr's mother to "influence and recruit others to her cause," and for her story to

[37] Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1924), 28.
[38] Ibid., 29.
[39] Suzanne Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 15.

work, readers and witnesses needed to understand and relate to the depths of the mother's love for her child.[40] According to historian Suzanne Evans, when these stories include the mother of the martyr, "she is at times the one who bears witness to her child's convictions. At other times she is a silent but prominent character."[41] Initially, Ayşe barely spoke, and Peyami recalled:

> Sometimes I watched her silent face and tried to believe that there was nothing beautiful about it! […] The eyes altogether too sad, but I had to admit that the fire and suffering behind these was the light and flame which kindled those around her. Sometimes I found in her the soul of an unhappy woman lost in grief, and then again, the sudden flame in her grave eyes, the force of her strong lips, made her seem a fearful and dangerous being of a somber simplicity.[42]

Her silence forced the people who encountered her to read her affective signs: her eyes conveyed agony and rage, even causing fear.

By naming Ayşe's son Hasan, Halide Edip further embedded this story within a broader historical and religious martyrological tradition. The name referenced the martyrdom at Karbala of Hasan and Husayn, the sons of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph, and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. Halide Edip made explicit references to this event with Ayşe even recalling "the grave of her baby martyr."[43] In many ways, her son Hasan was an unlikely martyr; contrasting with the adult martyrs of Karbala, he was a young child who did not have a say in the world of wars and conquest. He was collateral damage in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's defeat and some Turks' acquiescence to the Allied Powers' control over Anatolia.

Ayşe's presence in Istanbul forced family, friends, and visitors to bear witness to her child's martyrdom and act. Upon encountering the English Colonel Cook, Ayşe recalled, "I can see well a man [her husband] dragged from his door, torn to pieces, his little baby of five shot

[40] Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs*, 8.
[41] Ibid., 16.
[42] Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, 40.
[43] Ibid., 55.

simply for the pleasure of shooting. Poor little round creature, shot in his heart before the tears could dry in his black eyes. It was such a good shot that he did not have time enough to utter even, 'Mama,' in complaint."[44] These words specifically served as a call to action. Evans writes, "All of the stories of mothers of martyrs come from patriarchal views in which women were or are viewed as needing protection […] the target audience of this propaganda is men whose masculinity is challenged by the courage shown by women."[45] Ayşe's testimony emboldened the men around her to join the nationalist movement. Yet, Halide Edip did not write her protagonist as the stereotypical mother of a martyr, and Ayşe resisted contemporary views on women's sociopolitical contributions. Halide Edip reframed martyrology as a tragedy and that such events should be avoided at all costs.

Nevertheless, as a result of gender norms, male interlocuters frequently used Ayşe's emotions as a means to sideline her. After recounting the deaths of her husband and son, Ayşe, sobbed "like a helpless child, like a bereaved mother."[46] By referring to her first as a child and then as a mother, the men around her used this infantilization to block her from joining the cause. If they would not let her pick up a weapon, she offered to "tend the sick and close their eyes at their last moments, giving them the love of a mother and a sister."[47] Ayşe did not ask for male protection and indeed rejected it. She declared, "I hate those most who want to protect me, who want to keep, nay, preserve me, in a shell […] You wish to keep me in safety like a city woman which I was."[48] In her convictions and desire for action, Halide Edip subverted longstanding expectations of women: that they were to remain passively at home in times of war. Yet once

[44] Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, 49.
[45] Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs*, 16.
[46] Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, 50.
[47] Ibid., 112-3.
[48] Ibid.

again, the author demonstrated that men critiqued her emotions as a means to negate her commitments. Narrator Peyami said, "Ayşe breathlessly flung this rebellious speech in my face and sat sulking like a child […] She was like a child tonight and argument could only lead her to some contradictory and mad deed."[49] In Peyami's analysis, Ayşe's behavior delegitimized her frustration with the nationalist effort. He suggested that Ayşe's emotions and mood swings threatened her safety and that of the entire cause. She could be their object or symbol to rally around, but men refused to allow Ayşe the autonomy to be an active participant on her own terms.

Predicting the Fascist Future: Messina's A Flower that did not bloom *(1923)*

As DeGrazia notes, in Fascist Italy, "the duty of women toward the nation lay first and foremost in making babies but was not a foregone conclusion."[50] Maria Messina's 1923 novel *A Flower that did not bloom* (*Un fiore che non fiorì*), set contemporaneously in the Fascist present, emphasized the ambiguous and often paradoxical position young Italian women embodied within the first years of the *Ventennio*. Unlike her 1928 novel *Love denied* (*L'amore negato*) set in the late nineteenth century, *A Flower that did not bloom* existed within the culture and politics of 1920s Italy. Alongside her close friend Fanny as "*i duci*" of their group and the rest of their set, Franca flirted with men, wrote letters to admirers, and enjoyed wearing her hair short and playing tennis.[51] Living in Florence, these girls embodied pre-*donna-crisi* culture: women, particularly those in cities, could have access to the public sphere. Franca and Fanny believed that in this revolutionary moment they could reshape gender roles and sexuality for themselves.

[49] Halide Edip, *The Shirt of Flame*, 113-4.
[50] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 41.
[51] Maria Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, Editori, 1923), 53.

Messina used Franca's subsequent experiences as a warning for what the Fascist future held: the state required Italian women to limit their autonomy and sexuality in service to the nation by accepting the mantle of wife and mother.

Within the novel, Messina established a dichotomy between Franca and Fanny to show what women's conformity and dissent could look like in the *Ventennio*. When Franca returned to Florence after a year's absence, she discovered that Fanny had married and become a mother. Entering "Signora Maurino's" marital home, Franca thought, "Poor Fanny!"[52] As she moved through her friend's new home, Franca continued her laments for *Povera Fanny*, incredulous that the friend who taught her how to flirt could give up her autonomy for the boundaries of matrimony. When she finally found Fanny, Franca failed to receive a warm welcome. Fanny distractedly repeated, "What a surprise! What a surprise!"[53] Confused and uncertain by this greeting, Franca asked if her visit was a bother and offered to return later. Signora Maurino allowed her to remain but mentioned, "I am not always free."[54] This first subtle comment about her new life, status, and priorities signaled Fanny's focus on conforming to the Fascists' prescriptions for womanhood. Messina wrote, "Franca observed her. It was Fanny: yet she no longer resembled Fanny […] her eyes no longer were laughing. All of her appearance was serious: not sad, not at all, but serious."[55] In transforming from a single woman to a married young mother, Fanny's affect also changed, and Franca felt the ghost of her friend's past personality.

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[52] "Ora Fanny si chiama: signora Maurino. Povera Fanny!" Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì*, 145.
[53] "'Che improvvista!' ripeteva Fanny, un po'distratta. 'Che improvvisata!'" Ibid., 145.
[54] "'Ti dò noia? Volevo salutarti subito.' 'Oh! Figurati! […] Ma io non sono sempre libera.'" Ibid.
[55] Franca l'osservava. Era Fanny: eppure non le pareva più Fanny […] gli occhi non ridevano più. Tutto il suo aspetto era serio: non triste, niente affatto, ma serio." Ibid., 146.

Trying to figure out who Signora Maurino was, Franca commented, "You are happy." In an attempt at solidarity or humility, Fanny responded, "Oh! One is never happy," but her face reddened, perhaps embarrassed that Franca noted a difference, but the sparkle in her eyes and the warmth of her voice contradicted her words.[56] Recognizing Franca's surprise and confusion, Fanny explained,

> Not that I am missing anything! It would be a pity to complain […] Pio [her husband] is an angel […] and Ferruccio [her baby] is so beautiful, he grows so well! Before he came into the world, I cried a lot! I had thought that he would be born ugly, sickly, defective! You cannot imagine (although with the imagination, you think of everything) how it feels to live when you have a little son![57]

Despite her initial fears of potentially not having a healthy baby, Fanny emphasized that marriage and motherhood changed her for the better. Despite these assurances, Franca viewed Fanny's new happiness as a delusion; leaving the Maurino residence, she mused, "Poor Fanny! What a disappointment to see her again! Yet she was happy; seeing that she thought she had achieved her goal."[58] In Franca's experiences, Fanny's achievement of marriage and motherhood was a hollow one and a rejection of who they were.

After numerous visits to the Maurino household, Franca felt betrayed by the friend who had encouraged her to claim her autonomy through flirtation and active engagement in public life. She thought,

> Fanny was happy. Truly happy […] Signora Fanny Maurino did not hide sometimes from her, with a half-repressed yawn, that she would have preferred to be alone

[56] "'Sei contenta,' fece Franca. 'Oh! Contenti contenti non si è mai,' rispose Fanny arrossendo. Ma lo sfavillo degli occhi, il tono caldo della voce smentivano la risposta." Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì*, 147.
[57] "'Non che mi manchi qualche cosa! Sarebbe peccato lagnarmi! […] Pio è un angelo […] Ferruccio è cosi bello, cresce così bene! Prima che venisse al mondo pianto tanto! Mi ero messo in mente che sarebbe nato brutto, malaticcio, difettoso! Tu non puoi immaginare (sebbene con la fantasia si arrivi a tutto) come si senta di vivere quando si ha un figlioletto!'" Ibid.
[58] "Povera Fanny! Che delusione averla riveduta! Eppure ella era felice; [poiché] credeva di avere raggiunto la sua meta." Ibid., 150.

with her son and drink tea in her husband's study than be in the company of her old friend.[59]

While literary scholar Lara Gochin Rafaelli emphasizes that *A Flower that did not bloom* questioned "What options does a modern woman have in society?," Messina also provoked her readers to think of how modern society, especially under Fascism, threated young women's autonomy. Viewing her friend's whole-hearted acceptance of motherhood, Franca's determination to upset Fanny's domestic contentment demonstrated a mode of resistance to societal dictates of women.

As Raffaelli writes, the dichotomy between tradition and modernity—particularly the ways women should embody or reject them—rested at the heart of *A Flower that did not bloom*. Though Messina began writing the novel years prior to the October 1922 March on Rome, her revisions purposefully incorporated elements of the Fascist reality. [60] Reading the novel as a hidden transcript, Franca's story warned readers of how intensely women's lives would be regulated and controlled by the Fascist regime. Gochin writes that the novel revealed Fascism's hypocrisy, particularly with regard to men and women's sexuality. Men within *A Flower that did not bloom* freely embraced promoted notions of sexual aggression whereas society chastised, scorned, and rejected young women like Franca perceived for acting without chastity.[61] Through

[59] "Era felice Fanny. Veramente felice […] La signora Fanny Maurino non le nascondeva qualche volta, con uno sbadiglio mezzo represso, che avrebbe preferito essere sola col suo bambino e prendere il tè nello studio del marito, anzi che restare in compagnia dell'amica di un tempo." Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì*, 155.
[60] Lara Gochin Raffaelli, "Una storia approfondita: Le lettere di Maria Messina ad Alessio Di Giovanni ed Enrico Bemporad (1910-1940), *Italica* 86, no. 3 (2009): 359. The author quotes directly from the letter in footnote 109. "Forse questo romanzo, progettato nel 1920 o 1921, era uno dei tenevano "tanto occupata." Raffaelli cited Messina, Maria, Lettera n. 13 senza data Dicembre 1920. In the novel, characters discussed F.T. Marinetti and made references to a self-constructed *decalogo*. Throughout the era, Mussolini issued numerous "10 Commandments": *Il decalogo di 1923*; *Il decalogo della donna italiana* (1925); *Il decalogo del Balilla* (1927); *Il decalogo della piccolo italiana* (1935); and *Il decalogo del giovane fascista* (1936) among others.
[61] Lara Shantal Gochin, "Maria Messina: Her Works" (PhD dissertation: University of Cape Town, 1997), 107-8.

the character of Franca, Messina prophesized that Fascist gender politics would demand Franca and other girls of her generation limit their sexuality only to a reproductive capacity.

After Franca went into isolation to escape the ostracization of her former friends, she struggled with her emotions. Raffaelli argues that, "In her life devoid of achievement, maternity would represent a sort of fulfillment […] [Franca] is aware of her meanness of spirit and she is also aware that it is the fault of society that she is bad"[62] Her self-awareness radically resisted the shame and conformity that Fascists demanded of Italian women. Recognizing her hurt and anger, Franca attempted to ease her pain by attempting a form of care coded as maternal: teaching young children near her place of convalescence. Messina wrote, "How many children! So many, far away, not hers that Franca cannot love them all as she would have loved only one."[63] It was not in Franca's makeup for her to feel maternal longings.

By the end of the novel, Franca fully rejected Fascist expectations for women since she "did not experience pleasure from the proximity to objects that are attributed as being good."[64] By showing Franca struggling in this maternal-adjacent role, Messina demonstrated that she had the opportunity to reevaluate her desires and, gave her one last suitor. She pondered marriage but ultimately decided, "It is useless."[65] Raffaelli writes, "Franca who is unable to conform, has no choice but to withdraw from society. Alienated and alone, she dies and this is her punishment."[66] Yet, the ending of the novel as more ambiguous. Though Franca was weak and bedridden, Messina closed the novel with her looking out the window. Whether she lived or died, the protagonist chose to remove herself fully from society. Choosing death or social distance was

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[62] Gochin, "Maria Messina: Her Works," 110-2.
[63] "Quanti bambini! Tanti, lontani, non suoi, che avrebbe amato uno solo." Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì*, 185.
[64] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 41.
[65] "'È inutile,' rispose Franca. 'Tutto è inutile oramai.'" Messina, *Un fiore che non fiorì*, 197.
[66] Gochin, "Maria Messina," 107.

neither passive nor punishment but the only available mode for Franca to retain personal autonomy; society did not deserve her conformity or her atonement.

Messina's depiction of Franca and her ostracization presented a warning to her readership, and this theme of ambivalence and potential rejection of the state's demands would be represented in works by Deledda and Muhiddin in the second half of 1920s. These novels by Halide Edip and Messina published at the onset of the regimes showed that women's status was not yet fully articulated and that women imagined numerous possibilities for their public roles in society. By the mid-1920s, however, the regimes publicly (and loudly) called for increased births and articulated that women needed to subordinate themselves to men's demands and the futures of their children to properly serve the nation.

Prolific Mothers of the Nation

By strange coincidence, both ONMI and the HEC established "parenting magazines" (*Maternità ed infanzia* and *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu*) in October 1926. Featuring articles by doctors, members of the organizations, and other health professionals, these monthly periodicals emphasized both that women were a "vital national resource" and that the regimes would tell them how to best care for their children.[67] Both the HEC and ONMI established the groundwork for the Fascists and Kemalists to articulate pro-natalist desires by the late 1920s. Being a mother of just one or two children would not be enough for the survival of Italy and Turkey.

By the spring of 1927, implicit and explicit calls for prolific births rang out in both Italy and Turkey. On 23 April, Turkish National Sovereignty Day expanded to also encompass "Children's Day" (*23 Nisan Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı*). The evolution of this

[67] DeGrazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 41.

celebration occurred because the HEC needed to raise public awareness of problems Turkish children faced and to emphasize their importance to the future of the nation. 23 April now featured parades, plays put on by and for children, film screenings, conferences for parents and children, and "robust" baby contests. [68] A month later, on 26 May 1927, Mussolini delivered his Ascension Day Speech (*Discorso dell'ascensione*) officially starting the regime's demographic campaign. He declared "It is a fact that the destiny of nations is linked to their demographic power […] maximum natality and minimum mortality."[69] In terms of public celebrations venerating children, Italy followed Turkey's example several years later. In 1933, the regime declared December 24 as Day of Mother and Child (*La giornata della madre e del fanciullo*). Linking this to the Catholic Church's holiest celebration of mother and child, this holiday called for ceremonies where most prolific families received awards.[70]

Although Grazia Deledda began writing *Annalena Bilsini* in 1925, she seemingly predicted how the Fascist regime would intensify its natalist demands. When Urbano Giannini, the Bilsinis' landlord, visited their farm, he complimented Annalena on her family. He declared, "I would have liked sons, at least a pair. Instead, I have only one girl, frail as a flower."[71] In describing his daughter Lia thusly, Giannini demonstrated she was less desirable because of her biological sex and her perceived physical weakness. In an attempt to placate him, Annalena recalled, "When my sons were small, without a father, without help, I was not happy to have

[68] Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 182-4
[69] "'Sta di fatto che il destino delle nazioni è legato alla loro Potenza demografica [….] Massimo di natalità, minimo di mortalità.'" Mussolini quoted in and translated by Natasha V. Chang in *The Crisis-Woman: Body Politics and the Modern Woman in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 110.
[70] Eden K. McLean, *Mussolini's Children: Race and Elementary Education in Fascist Italy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 86.
[71] "'I tuoi, Annalena Bilsini! E sopratutto bravi. È brava tu che li hai fatti e che ne fai degli uomini.' 'Eh, eh, si fa quel che si può,' disse Baldo, impettito, ammirando il suo uovo. Annalena aggiunse: 'E quel che si vuole.' 'Non è vero. Io, per esempio, avrei voluto dei figli maschi, almeno un paio. Invece non ho che una bambina, esile come un fiore.'" Grazia Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini* (Milan: Fratelli Treves Editori, 1927), 121.

them."[72] Giannini viewed children through the lens of utility and status, whereas Annalena articulated the material challenges of having numerous offspring. As a father, there were fewer demands on Giannini to care for children. Even Annalena who loved her sons struggled with motherhood and her child-rearing years were well before the Fascist regime's pro-natalist discourse.

During his visit, Gianinni asked Gina's two young sons to introduce themselves. Their names—Primo and Secondo—literally meant "first" and second" and were not the most imaginative but served a useful function as the dialogue continued. Giannini responded, "And may God give you the third, fourth, and twelfth."[73] Deledda set up this interaction so that this older man could express the regime's promoted notions of numbers as strength (*numero come forza*). Gina indeed belonged to the cohort who would be expected to give birth to many children. In her twenties, she was a prime candidate to assist in populating the Italian nation. As a woman belonging to an older generation, Annalena agreed with him. Historian Alba della Amoia articulated, marriage and maternity were the "perfect integration of biological and social laws."[74] Annalena, with her five adult sons, fulfilled her part in the cult of maternity, and surely her daughter-in-law would follow her example.

Prior to this chapter, I explored Gina's relationship to romance/heartbreak and age. Looking at Gina's emotions and feelings about motherhood reveals how Deledda embedded resistance to the regime's pro-natalist discourse within this character. However, Gina subverted

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[72] "'Non tutto si può avere, Urbano. A chi i figli, a chi la ricchezza: a chi la forza, a chi la pazienza. Quando i miei figli erano piccoli, senza padre, senza aiuto, non ero felice di averli. Ah, caro…'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 122. As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, Annalena married a much older man. Presumably she became a young widow whether he died from illness or natural causes.

[73] "'E il Signore vi di il terzo, il quarto, il dodicesimo.'" Ibid., 123.

[74] Alba della Amoia, *No Mothers We!: Italian Women Writers and Their Revolt Against Maternity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 2000), 61.

Giannini's prayers and the regime's dictates. Gina cried, "We hope not." Deledda continued, "Her voice sounded unusually mischievous and cheerful, and it seemed to crack the sense of embarrassment that had until now veiled the conversation."[75] Prior to this scene, Deledda repeatedly described Gina as quiet, sliding into the background and remaining at the fringes of boisterous meals at the Bilsini dinner table.[76] Her mischievous and cheerful voice in this interaction was out of character. Using the example of the Soviet Union, James C. Scott notes that dual cultures are formed under authoritarian conditions in which "the official [one] filled with bright euphemisms, silences, and platitudes and an unofficial culture that has its own history […] its own humor, its own knowledge of shortages, corruption, and inequalities that may once again, be widely known but that may not be introduced into public discourse."[77] In this scene, Gina's response was a form of hidden transcript. The others in the room interpreted Gina's response as a joke, by virtue of how it came out: mischievous and cheerful. If Deledda left the narration with only Gina crying out "We hope not!," the characters would perhaps have had a different reaction. In earlier chapters when Deledda narrated Gina's internal thoughts and feelings, readers knew how unhappy she was in her marriage and that she did not enjoy sex. As a result, her response of not wanting more children provided a legitimate expression of resistance to the regime's pro-natalist desires.

The visit and commentary on Gina's procreative expectations did not end after her assertion. Deledda noted that the atmosphere of this visit and conversation was embarrassing.

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[75] "'Speriamo di no,' gridò Gina. La sua voce però risonava insolitamente maliziosa ed allegra e parve incrinare qel senso d'imbarazzo che aveva velato la conversazione." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 123.
[76] "Quando parlava, il bianco dei suoi denti brillava azzurrognolo, come quello degli occhi; ma ella parlava poco e teneva sempre le palpebre abbassate: e sembrava triste." Ibid., 15.
[77] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 51.

What caused the embarrassment? Certainly, it could have been the sustained interaction with their landlord within the home. Another cause for embarrassment was the open discussion of Gina's reproductive capacities and perceived responsibilities. The landlord Giannini did not voice his wishes to her husband; instead, he placed the burden of procreation on Gina. Furthermore, as the conversation continued, he voiced his support for the regime's pro-natalist demands. Though complimentary of Annalena, he emphasized that Gina's immediate family with just two sons was smaller than the regime's desired family size. He said, "The fortunate families are the most numerous."[78] This exchange further became a way for Giannini to suffuse his own procreative shame for having just a single daughter. In his own failures, Giannini absorbed this message from the regime and wished children numbered 3, 4, and even up to 12 on Gina without a thought for her own desires.

As the chapter on romance demonstrated, Gina felt no love or affection for her husband. Yet twenty pages after the conversation with Giannini, she was pregnant again. Deledda spent little time describing Gina's pregnancy, and, in fact, she disappeared from the narrative for a while. Yet, the author provided a few clues to the young woman's feelings. Gina did not rush to her mother-in-law with tears of joy or loud shrieks of excitement. Instead, she "spoke to Annalena whispering ("*sottovoce*")." Within this mode of delivering the news, invoking quietness, whispers, and restraint, Deledda evokes two of Silvan Tomkin's affects: anguish and shame. Combining the reader's knowledge that Gina did not love her husband and the news delivered *sottovoce*, the reader could imagine Gina with her head lowered, her mouth downcast. Her mother-in-law, not Gina, shared the news with the rest of the family out loud ("*ad alta*

[78] "'Le famiglie fortunate sono quelle più numerose.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 124.

voce").[79] Gina's husband was absent in this conversation, and Deledda provides no insight into his views on his future child. Since Gina disappeared for the majority of the following pages, the reader could imagine her as sitting uncomfortably with her feelings: anguish perhaps for another pregnancy in an unhappy marriage and shame for lacking excitement about a third child. The regime, like Giannini, wanted Gina to have a large family, to welcome perpetual pregnancy. Instead, Gina faced a sense of failure and alienation (indeed one she was familiar with) because her desires were not those of the state.

National Futures: Gina and Zeynep's Babies

When Deledda and Muhiddin conceived of pregnant characters, they often emphasized the relationship of their unborn child to the future. Seemingly in line with the regimes' views of youth as the hope and strength of the nation, these authors actually subverted these expectations by revealing how their fictional mothers viewed new children through personal, emotional stakes. In *Annalena Bilsini,* Gina disappeared from much of the narrative after Pietro's attempted assault and the announcement of her pregnancy. Deledda framed excitement over the baby not through Gina's eyes but through her mother-in-law's: "Annalena saw again, happy that the season went well, that the prospect of winter presented itself in a very different color than last year; that a new small Bilsini was coming to the world."[80] Her forthcoming grandchild was a source of excitement, transforming the winter months from a downcast and dark time to one of light. Unsurprisingly, Annalena "hoped it was a boy, and the name was already decided: Terzo

[79] "Ai primi di giugno Gina diede sottovoce alla suocera una notizia che in breve si propalò nella famiglia. 'La Gina è incinta.' Annalena lo diceva ad alta voce, ascoltando il suono delle sue parole." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 144.
[80] "Annalena rivedeva, contenta che la stagione andasse bene, che la prospettiva dell'inverno si presentasse di un colore ben diverso di quello dell'anno scorso; che un nuovo piccolo Bilsini stesse per venire al mondo." Ibid., 262.

(Third)."[81] In her interactions with Gina's younger sister and despite not understanding the depressed Lia Giannini, Annalena's hope for a new male child perhaps indicated that she knew life would be better and easier, a more promising future, for a baby boy than for a baby girl.

When the child arrived, Deledda focused on broader familial reactions to the newborn, as opposed to the mother's experience of childbirth. Gina's daughter "was born, in a night of storm, a little premature, with silver hair like a cheap doll: and she was called Dionisia."[82] Gina only reappeared in the novel for this scene. As Amoia noted, Deledda "seemed to affirm maternity both in her marriage and motherhood yet her stories are frequently filled with dying mothers and aborted children."[83] Both mother and child survived in *Annalena Bilsini*, but there remained a sense of disappointment for Gina. After seeing her daughter for the first time, she commented that Dionisia resembled her sister Isabella and she "did not hide a certain sense of repugnance and hostility toward the baby."[84] Previously joking about not wanting to have any more children, Gina perhaps felt saddened that she was a mother yet again.

Within the extended Bilsini family, members expressed very different reactions to Dionisia. Nicknamed Gnocchin, "Little Dumpling ("*piccolo gnocco*"), her brothers Primo and Secondo expressed delight over their new sibling despite her gender: "Clinging to the bed where their mother lay, they wanted to see and kiss Gnocchin every moment."[85] As children, they did not see the baby as defective or as a disappointment. Deledda indicated that the regime had not yet indoctrinated Primo and Secondo with its toxic masculinity. Dionisia's uncles Giovanni and

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[81] "Si sperava fosse un maschio, ed era già pronto il nome: Terzo." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 262.
[82] "Nacque però, in una notte di bufera, una piccola settimina, coi capelli argentei come una bambola da pochi soldi: e fu chiamata Dionisia." Ibid, 263.
[83] Amoia, *No Mothers We!*, 83.
[84] "'Sembra figlia d'Isabella,' disse la madre quando gliela fecero vedere; e non nascose un certo senso di ripugnanza e di ostilità contro la bambina." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 263.
[85] "Il nomignolo di "piccolo gnocco" rimase alla bimba. Gnocchin andava, Gnocchin veniva. I fratellini, aggrappati alla coperta del letto ove giaceva la puerpera, volevano ogni momento vedere e baciare la piccola Gnocchin." Ibid.

Bardo teased her father Osea that instead of a third son, he created a little yellow flour dumpling. Taking it in stride, "Osea laughed heartily, saying maybe instead of him, the priest had a hand."[86] As Deledda previously voiced Annalena's preference for a boy, the older men also agreed and suggested that the birth of a daughter was a failure on the part of Osea. Though he seemed to accept his daughter, or at the very least did not express outright hostility or disappointment, his joke about infidelity was a way to absolve himself of the procreation of a girl. Since Gina remained absent for the rest of the novel, readers did not receive her further reaction to her daughter beyond her initial disappointment.

Although another boy would have been preferred, the majority of the Bilsinis were happy with little Dionisia. Perpetuating the misogyny of both Church and State—well before the Lateran Pacts—Baldo, the aspiring priest, complained about his niece. He viewed her as a "miserable creature" and as a "sign of God's ire towards his ambitious family."[87] Where Baldo viewed a girl was a burden, a source of potential danger, Annalena defended her granddaughter. She declared, "Gnocchin will grow, will become the most beautiful girl in the province, and if God allows it, the most fortunate. We will make her study to become a teacher."[88] Annalena's last hope for her granddaughter was surprising. From the nineteenth century onward, a deep-seated prejudice existed over the function and role of girls in society. The pervasive message was that girls needed to accept their future role as mothers and that "it was only a cruelty of fate that

[86] "Giovanni e Bardo apostrofavano ironicamente Osea che invece di un terzo maschiotto aveva procreato quel piccolo gnocco di farina gialla, e lui stesso, Osea, rideva di cuore, dicendo che forse, invece di lui, ci aveva messo mano il parroco." Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 263.
[87] "Baldo taceva, ingrugnato, sempre più gonfio di sdegno per la poca religione dei fratelli: e quella meschina creatura, venuta innanzi tempo al mondo fra la bella dei parenti e degli stessi genitori, gli sembrava un segno dell'ira di Dio contro l'ambiziosa sua famiglia." Ibid.
[88] "La madre lo respingeva col gomito: 'Ma va là: il più bel guaio sei tu, brontolone. La Gnocchin crescerà, diverrà la più bella ragazza della provincia, e se Dio vuole la più fortunata. La faremo studiare da professora.'" Ibid., 264.

condemned her to become a worker, employee, teacher, doctor or lawyer."[89] Instead, Annalena did not view her granddaughter's potential education as a detriment; the Bilsinis' newly acquired wealth meant that Dionisia could aspire to a life beyond working on the farm. Her education would open new doors and enable her to surpass the status of her ancestors. Baldo, however, became further scandalized by his mother's aspirations for the baby. Deledda wrote, "Baldo disapproved more than ever. 'But fine! In the meantime, you had better get her baptized.'"[90] Still, Annalena framed her hopes for Dionisia not through the perpetuation of children but as the potential to attain education and status. The birth of Gina's daughter highlighted the contentious and ambiguous position of women within Fascist society.

Similar to Gina, Nezihe Muhiddin's protagonist Zeynep initially expressed ambivalence towards motherhood in 1929's *My Self is Mine!* (*Benliğim Benimdir!*). As discussed in Chapter 3, Zeynep's owner Nusretullah Pasha raped the young slave girl. Following his wife's death, he forced Zeynep to marry him. While awaiting the wedding ceremonies, she noticed that the window in her room was open and she attempted to escape. She reached the ground but was surprised by a nameless young man standing beneath her window. Studying him, Zeynep found "For the first time in my life, I had wanted to abandon myself in the unknown pleasure's dream of being taken into a boy's arms."[91] She determined that before the marriage to Nusrettulah Pasha could be officially consummated, she would reclaim her autonomy by meeting this young man again. That night, Zeynep had her first consensual sexual encounter. Muhiddin wrote, "What happiness! […] I felt a happy joy that my physical and spiritual self was in possession of

[89] Amoia, *No Mothers We!*, 63.
[90] "Bardo disapprovava più che mai. 'Fareste meglio, intanto a farla battezzare.'" Deledda, *Annalena Bilsini*, 264.
[91] "Hayatımda ilk defa bir erkeğin kolları arasında alınacak meçhul zevkin hülyasına kapılmıştım!" Nezihe Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!* (Istanbul: Sudi Kitaphanesi, 1929), 57.

his chest and arms…for the first and last time in my life, I accepted this sweet submission and was helpless […] I willingly and lovingly gave him myself!"[92] By granting consent, Zeynep revolutionarily claimed her body and sexuality for herself. Muhiddin's focus on Zeynep's pleasure, not even considering the potential for pregnancy, contradicted the regime's idealized image of the "asexual" woman.

But the lovers were discovered, and the young man was killed. Zeynep fell ill, and after being treated by a doctor, Nusretullah Pasha received congratulations for his impending fatherhood. The pasha demanded Zeynep reveal the father of the child, and she refused, "What will you do? […] I will not say a word if you are cutting me into pieces!!"[93] He screamed at her, "Are you a whore? Tell me?!" Zeynep fired back, "Yes! I am a whore. I have been since the day you raped me! […] Now I am the world's most chaste mother."[94] Because Nusretullah Pasha was both her owner and now husband, he demanded that she reveal the child's father. Because he was an authority figure and had power by virtue of his gender and status, he asked, "Who is the child's father? Tell me, I am telling you!! Tell me, I promise that I will not kill you. Only him!" Zeynep bravely refused, "No, you will not find out who he is without killing me, take out my heart and ask it! Demon!!"[95] It was ambiguous who the child's father was but it did not matter to Zeynep. After this argument, in which Nusretullah Pasha threatened to strangle the unborn child upon birth, Zeynep collapsed into her bed and thought, "I began to hiccup with the heart-

[92] "O ne saadet […] Bir lahza geldiği bütün maddî ve manevî benliğimi, onun göğsünün ve kollarının temellüğüne geçtiğini mes'ut bir hazla hissettim…hayatımda bu ilk ve son kabul ettiğim tatlı bir teslimiyet ve aciz oldu! [...] Çünkü, ben isteye isteye, seve, seve benliğimi, ona, hediye etmiştim!" Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!*, 63.
[93] "'Ne yapacaksın? Onu da Ferruh'un yanına mı yollayacaksın?!! Beni parçalasanız bir kelime söylemem!!'" Ibid., 66. Note: I retained all punctuation from the 1929 edition; it appears Muhiddin used lots of exclamations to emphasize her points.
[94] "'Dünyanın en afif bir annesiyim!!!'" Ibid.
[95] "'Çocuğun babası kimdir? Söyle diyorum sana!! Söyle, sana vadediyorum seni öldürmeyeceğim. Yalnız onu!' 'Hayır beni öldürmeden onu anlayamazsın, kalbimi çıkar ona sor!! Zebani!!'" Ibid.

breaking pain of a mother whose child was being strangled in front of her […] When I opened my eyes, I found inside myself an entirely other feeling! I wanted to live! In life, I too had a purpose! I was the possessor of a loving, thinking thing in the world!"[96] Similar to how women's suffrage activists often used maternalist language to advocate for rights, Zeynep used her motherhood to reclaim her personal autonomy.

While previously believing death was the only possible path to freedom, Zeynep decided to put the life of her unborn child ahead of her own. For the first time in her life, she realized the finality of death and that she did not want to end her existence. She would not risk this child to escape her own torture and bondage. Additionally, the pregnancy in *My Self is Mine!* served as a way to render the text desirable to the goals of the Kemalist regime. Muhiddin's emphasis on Zeynep's unborn child reflected the sociopolitical stakes of pregnancy and motherhood in the early Turkish republic. Though a rape victim, Zeynep would still lack few options for reproductive choice, as new policies prohibited women from abortion. In 1926, the newly adopted Turkish Penal Code (modeled on Fascist Italy's) initiated the nation's pro-natalist turn, and for the first time, the government criminalized abortion.[97] By wanting Zeynep to protect her child, Muhiddin made sure the novel conformed with elements of Kemalist policy. Furthermore, in 1930, the year following its publication, the Public Hygiene Law (*Umumi Hifzissihha Kanunu*) prohibited contraception.[98] If Muhiddin wrote Zeynep as undergoing an abortion, her novel would face further censure.

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[96] "Ben, yatağa kapanarak, gerçekten, gözlerinin önünde yavrusu boğazlanan bir ananın yürekten kopan acısıyla hiçkırmağa başladım…Gözlerimi açtığım zaman, kendimi, büsbütün başka hislerin içinde buldum!...artık yaşamak istiyordum!...hayatta benim de bir gayem vardı!...Dünyada sevecek düşünecek bir şeye malıktım!" Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!*, 67.
[97] Nazan Maksudyan, "Control over Life, Control over Body: female suicide in early republican Turkey," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 6 (2015): 866.
[98] Ibid.

Discourse of the early republican era emphasized women's reproductive capacities as essential to the nation-state's survival. As a result, many novelists articulated that the family was necessary for societal harmony and happiness; women could only join the national community through their role as mothers.[99] While women certainly could and did demand greater equality through the maternal role, Muhiddin demonstrated that motherhood was not a pre-condition to equal citizenship in Turkish society. Instead, Muhiddin wrote Zeynep's identity as a mother couched solely in individual and personal terms. Zeynep did not want to share her child with Nusretullah Pasha, a stand-in for the broader Turkish state; her child was hers. Zeynep articulated that she wanted and demanded autonomy and respect because she was a human being. Her pregnancy added another layer that society and the government should have protected her from the Nusretullah Pashas of the world.

After the Young Turks rescued Zeynep from Nusretullah Pasha, her marriage was ostensibly made void and she received several marriage proposals. Yet she turned them all down.[100] This refusal signaled that Zeynep would not accept the dictates for a prolific motherhood. Zeynep's tale ended with her as the single, unmarried mother to a young boy. This choice demonstrated that Muhiddin did not feel her character needed to conform to the traditional family, a subversion of the Kemalist state's demands.

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[99] Elif Gözdasoğlu Küçükalioğlu, "Imagi-nation of Women as Gendered National Subjects in Turkish Novels (19231938)," *Hawwa* 4, no. 2 (2006): 321.

[100] "Kalbimde yaşayan, o ilk sevgili hayalı yavaş yavaş silindi, Ferruh ismini tahattur ederken karşıma testekerlek, yayvan bir çehre geliyor, benimse, bu kadar dağdağadan sonra bir çocuğum var!! Simdi, boyu benden yüksek!…o, ne isterse onu yapıyorum kalbimin her zerresine hakim oluyor!! Bazen, oğlumla, zavallı babasının mezarını ziyarete gidiyor. Ve ben bütün benliğimi…uğrunda, en can acıtan işkencelere göğüs gerdiğim, en giranbaha pırlantalara bir, zerresini değişmediğim benliğimi seve seve ona, esir ediyorum!…Söyleyin aziz karilerim!…Ben neyim?" Muhiddin, *Benliğim Benimdir!*, 71.

What Makes a Mother in the 1930s?: The Whip (1932) and *Beauty Queen* (1935)

"Unfulfilled maternity" perhaps felt especially potent during an era that praised women's reproductive capacities and, indeed, demanded women fulfill this biological destiny in the service of the nation. By the 1930s, the Fascist and Kemalist regimes solidified their pro-natalist expectations for women and presented less ambiguity in terms of rhetoric and policy. As a result, novels by Aleramo and Muhiddin explored the ways in which their characters had to redefine themselves within the boundaries of the traditional family. These fictional women found that their identities and existence would be mediated through their relationship to marriage and the family. In Aleramo's *The Whip* (*Il frustino*), after meeting Caris di Rosia's father, Mino Vergili expressed confusion about Caris's own parental status. Unlike her father, he said, "But you [Caris] exist for yourself, give the idea of an autonomous creation, without roots, without fruit […] you have never had children, is that not true?"[101] Before Aleramo wrote her protagonist's response, she depicted Mino registering Caris's affective response to his inquiry. He "saw on the woman's face a tremor that disturbed her pure lines, terribly." Pale, she said, "Why?" Confused as to why he asked, she finally answered "One, I had one, when I was not yet twenty-years-old."[102] Caris and Aleramo's biographies intersected in this moment. Shortly after feeling compelled to marry her rapist, Aleramo gave birth to her only son at the age of seventeen. Ultimately, she left her husband but would never be able to regain custody of her son. Although leaving her family was a life-saving event and hailed by Marxists and other feminists as a "revolutionary act," the loss of her son Walter was always "an overwhelming personal tragedy"

[101] "'Caris,' disse Vergili quando furono soli, per la stretta via della Migliara, tra i vigneti, 'Caris, tuo è incantevole. Ma tu esisti per te stessa, dai l'idea d'una creazione autonoma, senza radici, senza frutti…Non hai mai avuto figli, nevvero?'" Aleramo, *Il frustino* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1932), 63.
[102] "'Perché?' Fece ella, pallida su lo stelo scarlatto. 'Uno, ne ho avuto, uno, quando non avevo ancora vent'anni.'" Ibid.

for Aleramo.[103] In gaining her autonomy, Aleramo felt herself possessing an "unfulfilled maternity" even decades later.[104]

Caris was able to voice Aleramo's heartache at the loss of her son, but in some ways, the author endowed her protagonist with a less controversial reason for her childlessness. After telling Mino that he died after the age of two because of diphtheria, Caris thought, "Should she say how much she loved him? Should she say how in those two years she had lived only for him, detached from everything, for those merry caresses of those small hands, for the lightening soul in the smile of the mouth in bloom? Should she say what had remained, and that long bleakness in the limits of youth?"[105] Though Aleramo and Caris embarked upon and pursued independent lives that challenged norms of the conventional nuclear family, they were still mothers even if society did not allow for such an expansive vision of the role. Both the author and her character loved their sons, but tragic circumstances brought loss. Caris voiced this pain: "Always in the instances in which she relived the grief of a young mother, she felt irreparably alone, like in that time. No man could understand her, no dream could console her."[106] Like Mino expressed, Aleramo and Caris lived "without roots, without fruit" antithetical to the regime's promotion of the traditional family. In the absence of their children, women bore fruits in the form of their creative endeavors, but their pain remained.

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[103] Richard Drake, "Sibilla Aleramo and the Peasants of the Agro Romano: A Writer's Dilemma," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51, no. 2 (1990): 269.
[104] Ibid.
[105] "'L'ho perduto dopo due anni. In pochi giorni. Difterite.' Dire quanto l'aveva amato? Dire come in quei due anni non aveva vissuto che per lui, staccata da tutto, per la carezza festosa di quelle piccole mani, per quell'anima ballenante nel sorriso della bocca in fiore? Dire com'era rimasta, e il lungo squallore sul limitare di giovinezza?" Aleramo, *Il frustino*, 63.
[106] "Sempre negli istanti in cui riviveva il suo lutto di madre fanciulla, si sentiva irreparabilmente sola, come in quel tempo. Nessun uomo poteva intenderla, nessun sogno consolarla." Ibid.

In Aleramo's writing, to be without a child, however, was not couched in failure of state goals or in embarrassment of being less-than. Loss and grief were personal. It is important to draw attention to the fact that Aleramo specified "*nessun uomo*" or "*no man*," not just "*nessuno*," ("*no one*"). To give credit to the Fascist regime, reducing child mortality was a major concern and something they worked to prevent. They would not have blamed Caris for her child's death but would not have supported her pregnancy out of wedlock. However, a lack of children or barrenness presented the potential for women to feel shame. Caris's grief would be palpable and recognizable to women readers who perhaps suffered their own child-losses or had mothers, sisters, cousins, and friends who had. Aleramo couched the understanding of her grief, the feeling of irreparable loneliness as something illegible to many men and those individuals who never bore the pain of this loss. In fact, after her face became strained and admitted that she had had a child, Mino guessed that the child was dead. He thought, "So, in front of the shadowy lake, what did it even matter to know who the child had been?"[107] While he thought the child lacked significance, that he asked Caris about her seeming lack of progeny demonstrated that Mino thought of her vis-à-vis her reproductive capacities. He admired her art and her autonomous existence, but she was a woman and therefore her lack of fruitfulness did matter. In this moment, Mino objectified Caris, one of many such instances Aleramo wrote into her novel. He would always view Caris through her reproductive and sexual capacities.

Nezihe Muhiddin's protagonist in *Beauty Queen* (*Güzellik Kraliçesi*, 1935) also became the attention of objectification that ultimately encouraged the titular "beauty queen" to return to the traditional family. Literary scholar Kaitlin Staudt effectively argues that Muhiddin used the

[107] "Egli indovinò che il bimbo era morto. Allora, di fronte al lago d'ombra, che mai importava sapere di chi il figlio fosse stato?" Aleramo, *Il frustino*, 63.

novel to advocate for economic and political values that contrasted with the regime's aesthetic "empty, consumption-based modernity."[108] Yet following the final scene, in which Belkıs abandoned her beauty queen experience for her old life. Muhiddin included a "Three Years Later" epilogue. Despite previously questioning her engagement to Nedim Münir, she decided to marry him and then consequently had a daughter. Throughout the novel, Muhiddin meditated on the available modes of engaging with "modernization" and autonomy and demonstrated how hard it was for a woman to break from the confines of the state's desire for women as wives and mothers. Unlike in 1929's *My Self is Mine!*, where Zeynep chose not to get married, by 1935 Muhiddin—herself in a different political situation— recognized that not all women could resist the dictates of marriage and motherhood. In some ways, this ending for Belkıs recalled Suat Derviş's 1928 novel *Like Gönül*: the protagonists conformed to marriage but made choices based upon affirming their emotional autonomy when socio-politically, they lacked it. Turkish politics in the 1930s saw the Kemalist regime making some concessions to women's rights. In 1930, women gained the vote for local elections and the right to run for local office; in 1934, the regime extended the franchise at the national level.[109] The following year, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) held its congress in Istanbul. Indeed, IWSA President Margery Corbett Ashby in later interviews declared that Turkish women winning the right to vote prior to this congress was one of her proudest memories. She recalled meeting with the mayor of Istanbul when checking out the proposed venues for the meeting and said, "What a pity

[108] Kaitlin Staudt, "(In)visible beauty queens: literary modernism and the politics of women's Visibility in Nezihe Muhiddin's *Güzellik Kraliçesi*," *Feminist Modernist Studies* 2, no. 3 (2019): 299.
[109] Kathryn Libal, "Staging Women's Emancipation: Istanbul, 1935," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 35.

when women from all over the world come here and find your women haven't the vote."[110] Allegedly, the mayor passed Ashby's message onto Mustafa Kemal and, as a result, Turkish women received the national franchise.

The regime's commitment to its progressive attitudes towards women only lasted until the end of the Congress. Libal writes that "Atatürk and other leaders portrayed the Istanbul Congress as a sign of the world's endorsement of Turkey's recent legal reforms related to women's status."[111] Yet, unlike Benito Mussolini twelve years prior in Rome, Mustafa Kemal did not attend the conference proceedings. Following the conclusion of the Congress, Ashby accepted an invitation to visit Ankara where Mustafa Kemal opened up his home to IWSA members. In her interview with the Turkish leader, Ashby found him to be sympathetic. Almost immediately after IWSA members left Turkey, however, Mustafa Kemal determined that since women reached "equality" with men vis-à-vis the franchise, they no longer needed the TKB. In her recollections, Ashby commented that she "suspected rather dirty work" and blamed the Russian [Soviet] ambassador for the decision to close the TKB: "now that women had the vote, they did not need their separate organization."[112] Though no evidence exists to support Ashby's assertation, it remains that by granting Turkish women the national vote, the regime could emphasize their "progressiveness" and sideline potential opponents to their policies.

Seemingly, the "three years later" epilogue in *Güzellik Kraliçesi* presented a view into the political future for young wives and mothers like Belkıs. While Muhiddin attended the IWSA

[110] Margery Corbett Ashby Interview, 21 September, 1976, 8SUF/B/106, Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragists Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews, Women's Library at the London School of Economics. Interview took place at the University Women's Club, 2 Audley Square, London.
[111] Libal, "Staging Women's Emancipation," 38.
[112] Margery Corbett Ashby Interview, 21 September, 1976, 8SUF/B/106, Oral Evidence on the Suffragette and Suffragists Movements: the Brian Harrison interviews, Women's Library at the London School of Economics.

Congress in Istanbul, she took issue with the organization's emphasis on pacifism. In an interview with Suat Derviş (wearing her journalist cap), Muhiddin declared, "Look, we are Turkish women. We are obligated to raise our children as defenders of the country…I am a feminist, but women should not meddle in such important affairs."[113] Reading *Beauty Queen* as a hidden transcript, Muhiddin voiced a desire for Turkish women's autonomy without objectification from either the Orientalist gaze of women like Ashby *or* the instrumentalization of women to prove the Kemalist regime's "progressive" nature. Just like with *My Self is Mine!*, Muhiddin used fiction to reflect her own views on national politics despite the regime's continued marginalization of her. As a result, Belkıs chose to get married and become a mother after achieving self-awareness of her own desires. Within the epilogue, Muhiddin did not give Belkıs's own views on her newfound maternal status but also did not write her as unhappy either. This ending suggests that Muhiddin wanted Belkıs to claim her personal autonomy to raise her daughter with self-confidence and acceptance. Still when Turkish women like Belkıs were granted the right to vote, they struggled at the interpersonal and societal level in terms claiming self-autonomy.

Conclusion

Through policy and rhetoric, the Fascist and Kemalist regimes intensified their demands for women citizen-subjects to fulfill their biological duties. Where Halide Edip discussed child welfare as a necessary element of the state, she did not immediately present pronatalism as the proper course of action and demonstrated that women needed to belong in national political efforts. Authors Aleramo, Deledda, Messina, and Muhiddin did not construct characters who

[113] Libal, "Staging Women's Emancipation," 43.

thought about maternity through the regimes' desired lens. By writing ambivalence or uncertainty, they articulated that motherhood—coopted into the public sphere by these authoritarian regimes—was a major source of tension and emotional burden for many Italian and Turkish women in the interwar Mediterranean.

Conclusion

By 1936, the paths of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes started to diverge. Benito Mussolini, seeking imperial glory, commenced the invasion and occupation of Ethiopia and proclaimed its new colony *Africa Orientale Italiana* (Italian East Africa), incorporating also what is now modern Eritrea and Somalia. Unlike il Duce, Mustafa Kemal proved disinclined towards foreign expansion. Undoubtedly the invasion of Ethiopia proved a cause for concern. As many historians of Fascist and Kemalist foreign policy have demonstrated, the warmth between these two regimes only lasted for a brief window. Worried about their territorial integrity and sovereignty, Turkey effectively petitioned for control over the Straits and the ability to regulate the transit of naval warships at the July 1936 Montreux Convention.[1] The memory of the First World War's trauma and the continued violence in the War of Independence led Mustafa Kemal to emphasize "peace at home, peace in the world." In the same year, Mussolini established an alliance with Adolf Hitler, forming the Axis in October 1936. Two years later, on 10 November 1938, Mustafa Kemal died at the age of 57 due to cirrhosis of the liver. His Prime Minister İsmet İnönü became the second president of the Turkish Republic. Under his leadership, Turkey maintained a policy of neutrality during the Second World War until 1943 when İnönü felt confidence in the Allies' eventual victory.[2] In the same year, Mussolini lost control of Italy. Finally on 27 April 1945, he was executed by partisans.

Yet this dissertation was not about these two leaders and instead emphasized the harmful effects their authoritarian politics had on Italian and Turkish women in the interwar. Authors

[1] Dilek Barlas, "Friends or Foes?: Diplomatic Relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-36," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 247.
[2] Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History, Third Edition* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 205.

Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Suat Derviş, Halide Edip, Maria Messina, and Nezihe Muhiddin preserved women's dissent towards and critique of the Fascist and Kemalist regimes within the pages of their novels. In a period marked by the suppression of opposition and the continued, intensified subordination of women to men, these novelists used fiction as hidden transcripts of their calls for women's autonomy. Where the Fascists and Kemalists vowed that they presented a sharp break with their peoples' failed pasts, the authors' personal biographies and writing careers demonstrated that within the realm of culture and with regards to women's education and social inclusion, many continuities persisted. Exploring their connections to women's organizations—whether suffrage-minded or not—Aleramo, Deledda, Derviş, Halide Edip, Messina, and Muhiddin all exhibited support for the elevation of women within Fascist and Kemalist society and used their novels to argue as such.

In reading these Italian and Turkish novels thematically and in conversation, many similarities emerge between these two interwar Mediterranean contexts. They articulated how romance, once viewed as liberatory, became another mode of controlling women. The Fascist and Kemalist regimes promoted a toxic masculinity that often manifested itself in verbal contempt and sexual assault. Although their characters did not always have happy endings, they showed how heartbreak served as a mode of feminist resilience. Their novels indicated how age *and* gender as interconnected identity categories intensified certain expectations and burdens for Italian and Turkish women. Unlike male doctors and ideologues who frequently suggested that young women and girls were unhappy because of unrequited love or, in the Kemalist context, a misunderstanding of modernity, many of these novelists articulated that, in fact, the demands of the regimes for young women to happily become married and produce fifteen children caused

major depression. Finally, in the chapter on motherhood, the authors wrote women's couching their feelings towards pregnancy in their personal, emotional experiences instead of relating their reproduction to the regimes' pronatalist demands.

Several of the studied authors never overcame or saw life after Mussolini or Mustafa Kemal. Grazia Deledda died from breast cancer at the age of 64 on 15 August 1936. Maria Messina experienced the beginnings of the Second World War but died after suffering complications for her multiple sclerosis in 1944. Sibilla Aleramo survived the war, becoming active in Communist politics in her later life, dying at the age of 83 in 1960. In Turkey, Nezihe Muhiddin continued writing with articles appearing in the 1950s. However, her death remains a historical mystery; several historians say she died in an Istanbul mental institution, whereas extended family members at the time of her death insisted that she passed away from a heart attack in her home.[3] Suat Derviş's struggles actually intensified following the death of Mustafa Kemal. After joining the Turkish Communist Party, she spent eight months in prison after her arrest on 10 March 1944 for "illegal communist activity." Because of continued political persecution, Derviş left Turkey and lived abroad, primarily in France, from 1953 to 1963. Once she returned to Turkey, she founded the Socialist Women's Association (*Devrimci Kadınlar Birliği*) and published her most famous novel *Radiant Cevriye* (*Fosforlu Cevriye*) in 1968. On 23 July 1972, Derviş died in her late sixties.[4] Following the death of Mustafa Kemal, Halide Edip and husband Dr. Adnan Adıvar returned to Turkey in 1939. She became a professor and in 1950

[3] Merve Pehlivan, "Nezihe Muhiddin's Sin of Being a Woman: A Conversation with Director Ümran Safter," *Bosphorus Review of Books* https://bosphorusreview.com/the-sin-of-being-a-woman-in-conversation-with-directormran-safter.

[4] Fatmagül Berktay, "Derviş, Suat," in Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi, eds, *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 111-2.

was elected to Parliament where she served until 1954. At the age of 79, Halide Edip died in her beloved Istanbul on 10 January 1964.[5]

In this dissertation, I argued that historians can incorporate creative literary sources into studies when institutional, political archives silenced or obscured women's voices. It is my hope that historians of other interwar Mediterranean contexts, such as Venizelos's Greece (1917-33) or Primo de Rivera's Spain (1923-30), will take up similar comparative projects. Early modern studies of various Italian polities and the Ottoman Empire dominate Mediterranean history; this dissertation shows that Italy and Turkey were still very much connected. For whatever reason, with regards to this dissertation, I often think of Shakespeare's opening lines to *Romeo and Juliet*: "Two households both alike in dignity." Instead of fair Verona, I expanded my analysis to the broader Mediterranean where the Fascist and Kemalist regimes sought to overcome feelings of inferiority and marginalization at the end of the First World War and claim dignity, respect, and international prestige during the interwar period. As a result, these authoritarian states demanded the subordination of the individual to the collective. For Italian and Turkish women, their intensified marginalization produced significant emotional and social burdens. Without novels by Sibilla Aleramo, Grazia Deledda, Suat Derviş, Halide Edip, Maria Messina, and Nezihe Muhiddin, our understandings of Fascist and Kemalist politics would be limited solely to male voices or only those institutional ones the dictators allowed.

[5] "Mrs. Halide Edib Adivar Dies," *The New York Times* (11 January 1964). nytimes.com/1964/01/11/mrs-halide-edib-adivar-dies.html.

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