This issue of Mosaic represents the collaborative efforts of many individuals. In addition to our wonderful contributors, we wish to thank:

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**In the United States:** Adam Carter and his colleagues at Destination Partners
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Creating scholarly communities is never an easy enterprise, but it can be particularly tough at a place like New York University’s Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Gallatin’s dual focuses on interdisciplinary learning and individualized study mean that no two students ever graduate having had identical learning experiences. And given NYU’s size, even students with similar academic interests might find themselves sharing only a few courses over their time here.

However, the student contributors to this issue of Mosaic prove that intellectual communities not only can exist but can thrive in such an environment. Indeed, their work suggests that scholarly vigor might best occur in climates in which difference is not only tolerated but warmly anticipated. Mosaic is the annual publication of the Albert Gallatin Scholars, an honors group at Gallatin whose members engage in research projects and work closely with faculty in preparation for an international trip each year. As this issue reflects, in 2009-2010 the Scholars studied the theme “The Creation and Maintenance of the Nation-State,” an investigation that helped prepare them for a 12-day trip to Turkey in January 2010.

Having come to know these scholar-travelers well during the course of the year, I can report that none of them began (or ended!) the year intending to focus their concentrations on Middle Eastern Studies. Instead, each brought his or her particular interests—usually academic, but sometimes more personal—to the communal project and made the project richer for it. That richness is evident within these pages. One Scholar’s poems, written each night between 9 and 10 p.m., pay homage to the poems of one of Turkey’s most famous dissidents, written during the same hours. Another Scholar, of Armenian descent, ruminates on what it means for a young person to travel freely in a country from which her ancestors were banished. A third Scholar researches a phenomenon that struck us all while in Turkey: Why are all those stray dogs seemingly so well-fed and so darn friendly?

Each of the 20 contributors to Mosaic brought unique insights to the group, the theme, and the trip. Perhaps their most discernible commonality was their enthusiasm for learning all they could about a new country. That enthusiasm is easily conveyed in their writings and artwork. Read and enjoy!

Patrick McCreery is the Director of Global Programs and an associate faculty member at the Gallatin School for Individualized Study.
To reach any sort of understanding of modern Turkey, one must first have a sense of the goals of its founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. His face can be found everywhere in Turkey, from restaurant walls to street merchant stalls, t-shirts to tattoos. As journalist Edward McBride writes:

“Atatürk reinvented Turkey on the model of a European nation-state. He replaced an absolute monarchy with a democratic republic, an explicitly Islamic ethos with staunch secularism, a fractured and inefficient administrative system with a centralised [sic] bureaucracy, and an agrarian economy with an increasingly urban and industrial society. For Turkey, Atatürk was the equivalent of the Pilgrim Fathers, George Washington and Henry Ford all rolled into one.”

Yet despite his immense popularity, Atatürk is not a universally revered figure in Turkey. As our guide in Turkey, Denizhan Pekoz, pointed out, the average Turkish shop will have either a picture of Atatürk above the doorframe, or an excerpt from the Qur’ān, but rarely both. In a move he deemed necessary for the modernization of his country, Atatürk abolished the Turkish caliphate, a political entity comprising both the political and religious leaders of the state (many leaders, like the sultan, held both political and religious authority). This was and is seen by many Turkish Muslims as a wrongheaded crippling of Islamic political strength in Turkey, creating a paradox: while Atatürk is wildly popular, the current, pro-Islamic ruling party (known as the AKP, or Justice and Development Party) has attempted to restructure the system of government he created with one far more influenced by Islamic law.

However, Atatürk assuredly has many fans. In 2008, the AKP lost half of its funding because it was found guilty of reforms that were “anti-secular” in nature. While we associate religious fundamentalism with the right wing in the United States, in Turkey, the most devout Muslims are left-wing, pushing for major political reforms, albeit ones that would re-establish Islamic political authority. On top of that, Atatürk’s prominence as a military figure and his use of the military as a political force has left the army entrenched as a major player in Turkish politics to this day. According to Serkan Yolacan, a lecturer at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV is the Turkish acronym), until recently, the army’s political motives and machinations were completely opaque, even denied outright.

Recent exposés on a handful of scandals have raised the demand that the army either acknowledge its existence as a political entity or cease its intrigues altogether, but neither seems very likely. For an American brain, used to differentiating only between Republicans and Democrats, it’s difficult to decipher the cacophony of political voices in Turkey. Continued conflicts with Kurds, self-identified “freedom fighters” labeled “terrorists” by the Turkish army, reveal a deep-seated tension approaching civil war. As the army imposes a draft, Serkan and...
Denizhan both alluded to actual stories of brother killing brother in recent battles. Despite Atatürk’s efforts to resolve the question, who is Turkish and who is not is still a matter of great debate. Many Kurds consider themselves a completely separate ethnicity and want to be left alone to rule themselves autonomously. Others see the opportunity present in cities like Istanbul and want to be allowed to assimilate without trouble. The Turks stand equally divided on whether to fight the Kurds, grant them their independence, or take measures to undo the damage their nation’s historical oppression of the Kurdish people has done. Right now, these aforementioned factions are locked in a zero-sum power struggle with no clear outcome. It is worth noting, however, that Denizhan’s money, as a fairly liberal secularist, was on the pro-Islamic party, which hasn’t shied from using violence against the Kurds.

The contradictions that arise in Atatürk’s own ascent to power can help shed light on Turkey’s current bizarre political situation. It should be noted that from his youth, Mustafa Kemal was singularly secular for his time. The majority of Turks practiced Islam, and under the crumbling rule of the Ottoman Empire, religious and racial minorities were beginning to assert their independence as nations. However, the Ottoman military, which sought to, at least indirectly, challenge the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid II by forcing him to restore a parliamentary constitution to the Ottoman Empire in 1908, was predominantly Muslim. While attending military school, Atatürk had been a member of a secret organization known as the Committee for Union and Progress, which would later expand as the Young Turk movement. This movement, responsible for the aforementioned 1908 restoration of the constitution, would continue to gain power as the Empire turned to its military in the course of World War I. This resulted in a pseudo-revolution in which progressive Turkish military officers deposed the Sultan outright in the name of democracy, only to install a de facto oligarchy in his stead, puppeteers of figurehead sultan Mehmed V.

Though Mustafa Kemal idolized leaders like Napoleon, who functioned as both soldiers and politicians, he disagreed with the Young Turks’ decision to engage in so militaristic a coup without thought towards popular sentiment. Indeed, this sudden move created a power vacuum in which counter-revolutionaries struggled...
with the Young Turks while the “Great Powers” of Britain and Russia threatened to swallow the remains of the Ottoman territory outright. The Ottoman Empire officially announced defeat in 1918, and, with the signing of the Treaty of Sevres in 1920, the Empire was partitioned between the two powers while the Ottoman government agreed to dissolve its armies. Upon hearing this news, Atatürk resigned from the Ottoman army and a warrant was issued for his arrest. This represented an important break for Atatürk, as he consciously rejected the singular military, religious, and political entity that had been the Ottoman Empire and instead functioned solely as a general, fighting for the sovereignty of his as-yet-imaginary nation.

Though he would later champion the separation of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Turkish state, Atatürk functioned as both a military and legislative leader as he arranged and led a series of congresses in order to abolish the sultanate and establish the Republic of Turkey and its Grand National Assembly. Atatürk’s great success as a hero of WWI granted him enough political capital to raise a movement based on Turkish nationalism with himself as its symbol. In this way, Atatürk managed to renounce the Young Turks as power-hungry generals who had lost a war, the sultan as a British sycophant, and the Ottoman Empire as a whole as defunct, while establishing himself as the heir apparent to their respective functions as governing bodies. This can be seen as a precedent to the modern Turkish army’s unspoken political function. Atatürk had much more trouble establishing his authority over his new nation’s Islamic authority, and the abolishment of the caliphate took several years after Turkish independence. Atatürk’s devotion to the idea of a republic was met with fierce resistance from Islamists. This led him to fall back on his popularity, on his status as a symbol of the Turkish nation itself, and assume the role of a benevolent dictator. In the early 1920s, his government granted itself exceptional powers in order to swiftly and mercilessly stomp out rebellions started by several influential Muslim sheikhs. As leader of Turkey from 1925 until his death in 1938, he concerned himself with every aspect of reform, including the new alphabet, secular education, women’s rights, the closing of Islamic courts, and the writing of secular law. Yet, as admired as he was, Turkey was still very much a work in progress when Atatürk died.

Is it any wonder, then, that subsequent leaders lacking Atatürk’s singular combination of brilliant military history, unity of vision, and political charisma were unable to finish what he struggled to start? In the sea of conflicting military, popular, and religious interests, Atatürk succeeded in part because of his military success and charisma, but chiefly because he held the success of nation above any one of the aforementioned powers. For him, Turkey itself was more important than its army, its church, and, indeed, its other politicians. This perhaps explains why Atatürk is so cherished today in Turkish culture, to the point that a mausoleum in his honor features a multitude of his personal possessions, including his socks and cigarette cases. He has become a symbol of slightly antiquated – but no less valued – nationalism. Not everyone in Turkey supports what Atatürk stands for; but it cannot be denied that Turkey owes its very existence as a modern nation to him. The savviest political parties, such as the AKP, advocate both modern progress and forging strong relationships with European countries while simultaneously supporting Islamist policies. In time, then, Atatürk’s cult status may decline, but he will always remain a symbol of the Turkish Republic first, and of secularism second.
I’m a collector. In the past I’ve collected stamps, Coca Cola paraphernalia, Pepsi paraphernalia, Beanie Babies, American Girl Dolls, decks of cards, mugs, postcards, and even erasers. The majority of these collections are useless, but one collection that is simultaneously priceless and fascinating is my collection of tickets from all of the museums and historical sites that I visited in Turkey. Not only are they unique souvenirs and reminders of all the places I’ve been, but they also reveal the great organization and uniformity that Turkey presents through its tourism industry. Each ticket is labeled with “Ministry of Culture and Tourism,” and on the back of each ticket are the rules for each site (no photography, no refunds, etc), written in English and Turkish. There is also a “Türkiye” logo, a holographic sticker, and, in most cases, a picture of the place one is visiting. Throughout the country, the tickets, the turnstiles, the logo, and the stickers are all the same.

This uniformity of tourism in Turkey struck me as being extremely different from the touristic experiences I’ve had in the United States. The U.S. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries website has a small picture of the Capitol building, a list of five headlines with corresponding pictures of, at most, ten square centimeters, a white background, and blue and black text. There are no lists of places to visit, and the entire site really has much more to do with the economics of tourism than with any attempt to draw tourists to the United States. There really is no nationally run site for tourism in the U.S. as a whole.

In contrast, the website for the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism boasts a huge Turkey logo, a beautiful slideshow of ancient mosaics and sculptures, scenic landscapes, crowded streets and nightlife shots; a video player; a virtual tour; scrolling text offering a sweepstakes to win a free vacation to Turkey; a reel of highlights including Istanbul’s status as a European Culture Capital for 2010, Obama’s visit to Turkey, and a headline stating “You don’t need to go to Rome, come to Turkey!”

What especially struck me was a commercial featured in the video section of the Turkish website. It begins with a shot of a beautiful bikini-clad woman emerging out of the water, backed by exotic sounding Middle Eastern music. A close-up on her face transforms into the face of a mosaic, which, in turn, transforms into stone sculptures. A sweeping shot reveals the Library at Ephesus, while a stone column morphs into a golf club hitting a ball on a luxurious golf course. The flag marking the hole in the golf course becomes the sail of a ship, which then billows out to become the dress of a whirling dervish. As the music reaches a climax, all of the images seen throughout the video are laid out in a checkerboard fashion and, as the images fade to black, the words “Welcome Home” appear.

Turkey wants to sell itself as a nation capable of seamlessly integrating – literally blending – Western elements like a bikini-clad woman and luxury golf courses with its ancient traditions and cultural history in order to appeal to a Western audience. Turkey wants to provide the commodities and liberalism that it believes make Western visitors feel comfortable (hence the “Welcome Home”), while still offering itself as an exotic land capable of providing tourists with a unique experience in a different culture. The integration of Eastern and Western elements that they include in their commercials shows a very important balance that Turkey is trying to make while maintaining a nation-state.
After our lunch of döner in the local style—each region having a preferred method of preparation—Sima, Patrick A., Sarah, and I decided to make our way back to a café in the conservative section of Ankara, deep in a maze of roads that make up its hill-bound neighborhoods. Sima and I had happened upon this hole-in-the-wall the day before during a short break between visits to deifying shrines to Atatürk, the man responsible for the current Turkish republic. According to what we were told, Atatürk created the republic through campaigns of modernization and westernization, which won the hearts and minds of the Turkish people. Indeed, he is as much of a religion and prophet for certain portions of the citizenry as Islam and Mohammed are for others. He is George Washington, had the American revolution taken place only eighty years ago and Washington been the lone beacon against imperial oppression.

We were in search of çay, the Turkish tea, symbolic of much more than a caffeinated beverage. Çay is a ritual for the Turkish people, as regular in occurrence as the calls to prayer that hail from the country’s many minarets. Using the many light shops and cobblers of the neighborhood as landmarks to retrace our way, we ambled up the narrow alleys. We arrived to find several of the same old men who had greeted us the day before once again perched on the stools outside. The eldest of the group welcomed us back with exuberance, offering us his place around the table. We sat and ordered, our friend relaying our wishes in yells to the kitchen.

After the men asked us to join them in their afternoon çay,
communication immediately proved challenging. Our limited Turkish—confined to basic numbers, hello, merci, the ubiquitous French adaptation used across the European continent—and their complete lack of English left us with only hand motions and facial expression to convey the basic facts of our lives. Family was easiest to communicate. Our friend motioned proudly of his seven children and twelve grandchildren, with a large family being both a sign of prosperity and virility, two things of utmost importance in an extremely patriarchal country like Turkey. In recognition, we gestured our admiration.

Our other new friend showed that he had two daughters about our age, pointing to Sima in reference. Both men’s eyes lit up when speaking of their offspring. Family is important here, made more poignant by the fact that surnames are as recent an invention in Turkey as the republic is.

They turned to us, asking about our own families. Sima said that her ‘baba baba’ and ‘mama mama’ (an attempt at ‘grandparents’) were from a city in the east of Turkey. Again, the men’s eyes grew bright ‘Türkisch!’ they both repeated. I gathered that they wanted to know if we were traveling to that city to which she replied, “no.” At this, they fell somewhat, expressing what I interpreted to be the unfathomable nature of coming so far and not seeing where your heritage lay—family again.

This disappointment lasted only momentarily. With their gaze remaining on Sima, the older man asked, “Islam?” She again said “no” but tried to convey that she had studied the Koran. Again, this didn’t come across. In the same moment, a wrinkled figure, shrouded in white, using a large staff to guide himself up the steep road, entered the café. A small commotion ensued, our friends excusing themselves to
greet this man. We decided this must be the community’s imam.

When the younger of our friends returned, he retrieved his prayer beads. They were dark wood with incredibly detailed silver inlay, easily the finest set we had seen since arriving in Turkey. We tried to ask where he had gotten them, since so many in our group had developed a fascination with this everyday object. Instead of answering us, he brought the beads to his lips and then raised them towards the sky, as if to say “They connect me to Allah.” The older man nodded. The younger proudly passed them around, sensing our intrigue.

Producing a small bottle from his jacket, the older man dabbed some liquid on Sima’s wrists, doing the same to himself and motioning that it should be put on the neck. He passed around the bottle, and we each took some of this liquid that smelled vividly of freshly cut roses.

The imam reappeared out of the café and glided gracefully up the hillside along his route to other shops of his followers. We had all long since finished our çay, and, feeling that we too should be on our way, we began to take out our money to pay. As we withdrew a few lira, our friends immediately made it clear that it would be their pleasure to pay, an offer, we surmised, it would have been insulting to refuse.

Grateful, we spent time embracing hands, nodding, and smiling back at one another. Seeing that we were on our way, several others emerged from the café to say goodbye. One of the men presented Sima with a picture of the imam who had just visited. In exchange, she offered them a snack of nut clusters from America. The men all examined them suspiciously but, after some consideration, agreed that they tasted good.

As a final parting gift, Sima offered her scarf to our older friend for one of his daughters. Not understanding, he took it delicately and wrapped it around her head in the Islamic fashion. He pointed to the café’s sign. “Semerkand,” he read. Samarkand, known up until the fall of Byzantium as the highest place of Islamic teaching throughout Central Asia, was, I thought, a fitting name for this place where these men meet day in and day out to share knowledge – knowledge of family, religion, politics, history.

Saying a final farewell, we set off along the same road as the imam, taking one last look back at our new friends. There was a certain timelessness to their existence. I felt that, were I to return to Semerkand twenty years from now, they would still be sitting there.

Meandering through the winding streets, we found ourselves in what seemed to be the neighborhood’s central square. The stalls that had once housed camels and the weary travelers that accompanied them now bore shops filled with the necessities of the practice of Islam: prayer beads, perfumes, rugs, gilded
Korans, and various other objects whose uses I did not know. These were certainly not the shops familiar to us from our visit to the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, which was overrun by tourists who ruin most of the places worth traveling to.

Standing in the middle of the market, I was overcome by a slight uneasiness. It felt as if I were intruding on a place where I truly was not meant to be. This place should be kept pure, I thought, from our western attire, from our visages, from the girls' uncovered heads.

We noticed a shop selling prayer beads like those our friend at the café had so proudly shown us. As I wandered inside, the shopkeeper gave a somewhat disapproving glare, heightening my sense of “otherness.” I inquired as to the price of one of the intricate strings of thirty-three beads in one of the broken Turkish phrases I had tried to learn. Emphatically, the owner asked, “Türkisch?” We replied “no” in chorus. “No sell! Out!” he demanded.

Slightly rattled, suspicions confirmed, I realized that his question revealed something about Turkish nationhood that had been in shadow in our more touristic journeys. By asking “Türkisch?” he wasn’t referring to the race or nationality, as would the stringent nationalists. Instead, his meaning was something else: “Muslim?”

This change in meaning opens up a realm of Turkish identity so often diminished by the state-regulated tour guides and the official national ideology. Certainly Turkey is a Muslim country, but, time and again, at nearly every site we saw, its secular identity was forced upon us as blindsers to this integral portion of their true national identity. Perhaps this Islamic identity is dying out. Indeed, the population of the conservative neighborhood was certainly older than the mean. But how can one claim a nation is truly secular when the government funds the upkeep of mosques and religious relics? More importantly, why should it?
Within the very documentation of its conception, Turkey’s arduous endeavor of projecting an image of itself as a modern nation-state devoid of Islamic influence has often contradicted not only the feelings of its people, but the actual state of its governing affairs. While currently in its fifth adaptation (per the amendments of October 2001), the Preamble to the Turkish Constitution has, since its initial ratification in 1921, stalwartly proclaimed the nation as adherent to the reforms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, most notably “the principle of secularism, [stating] there shall be no interference whatsoever by sacred religious feelings in state affairs and politics.” Despite this seemingly integral feature of the modern Turkish state, Turkish politics have long fostered an Islamist movement since the emergence of the secular republic.1 Today, the religiously affiliated AKP (Adalet ve Kalkı Partisi, or Justice and Development Party) currently holds a majority in the Turkish Parliament, and both the President and Prime Minister are AKP party members. Regardless of both the Turkish tendency towards laicism among elites following the Tanzimat secularist reforms of the Ottoman Empire, and the legal proclamation against religiously oriented political parties, Islamists have persevered throughout the past century within the Turkish political spectrum, and have, in turn, assisted the nation in realizing its political, economic, and social aspirations.

Before the protection of civil liberties proviso within the third Constitution, ratified in 1961, Islamist parties operated in Turkey through “covert and overt alliances with the ruling center-right Democratic Party.”2 Legalization of Islamist groups (though not their actions) reached a pinnacle with the establishment of the National Order Party (NOP) in 1970 wherein “Islamists for the first time had an autonomous party organization through which they could campaign their agenda,” having previously been hidden in conservative factions of center-right parties or underground.3 Though disbanded by the Constitutional Court for violation of the laicism principles of the Constitution (Preamble, art. 2, 19, 57) and the Law of Political Parties (Law 648, art. 92, 93, 94), the Islamic movement persevered through the fallen NOP and reemerged several more times throughout the twentieth century, with much of the same leadership and thought filtering through the progressing party titles: NOP (1970-71), NSP (National Salvation Party, 1972-81), RP (Welfare Party, 1983-98), and FP (Victory Party, 1997-2001).4

The popularity of these parties steadily increased approaching the twenty-first century as the import-oriented Turkish economy shifted toward becoming export-oriented, resulting in massive internal migration through which urban areas were flooded with formerly rural peasants seeking new, industrial jobs and finding mostly increasing levels of poverty. Coupled with the 100 percent inflation rate of the Turkish lira in the 1980s and 90s, both the middle class and the rising tides of urban poor suffered near devastation, which, in addition to the already simmering religious dissatisfaction of the conservative populace, led many to find within the Islamist movement the voice that they had been previously denied to express their
As the liberal, export-oriented economic development model proved fruitful in the Turkish economy, a new urban middle-class and business elite emerged in the late 1980s, often originating from provincial towns. By preserving their cultural heritage and belief systems from the secularizing shackles of urbanized Turkish life, this new class offered a counter-elite to mobilize the ignored masses in the cities and countryside, which, while still refusing to dismiss the bulk of the "Kemalist modernization paradigm" contracted by the Constitution, sought an alternative image of Turkish nationalism that did not dismiss Islam as a hindrance of institutions.

It was in this environment at the turn of the century that the AKP rose to prominence with rhetoric emphasizing "democracy, human rights, and personal liberty." In a country where many people’s religious practices have chafed against the nation-state’s "restrictive belief in freedom of expression" in regards to alternative notions of Turkish identity and Islam, AKP’s platform of making "Turkey... a more open society for practicing Muslims" was a rallying cry across the State. The most powerful challenge to date of the legal laicism within the Turkish Constitution, the AKP survived a closure case launched by the Turkish Constitutional Court in 2008 to become the most successful Islamist Party in the history of the Republic of Turkey. Since its inception in 1962, the Court has closed twenty-four parties for Islamic "agendas," and while this was the first time an investigation had involved an incumbent party, the preservation of the Turkish tradition of democracy was upheld by the Court’s decision not to disband the AKP. It is upon this victory that the AKP has become a key proponent of Turkey’s democratization reform.

While the AKP did overturn a law banning women from wearing headscarves in university, most of the Party’s other actions have been far from what western minds would associate as “Islamic.” The AKP has, in contrast to its “nationalistic, isolationist" secular predecessor, vigorously campaigned for Turkey’s enrollment in the European Union by working to fulfill the required Copenhagen Criteria, namely polishing its approach to human rights due to the Turkish Republic’s controversial history of violence towards minorities. In accordance with the Criteria, and not shying away from accusations of a “secret Islamist agenda,” the AKP has instead addressed such problems as “the headscarf ban issue as a matter of human rights violation and suppression of personal liberties rather than a matter of religion.” The AKP’s pro-European reforms are still resisted by the main opposition party, the secular CHP (Republican People’s Party), which, in addition to enflaming Islamic-extremist fears about the AKP, mobilized its members to vote “against a law that
would have expanded free speech and one [that would have] return[ed] property to religious minorities, both central to Turkey's European Union bid.\textsuperscript{15}

In stark contrast to the founding principles of Turkish identity established within the Republic's Constitution, parties that have deviated from the “Kemalist secularist orthodoxy”\textsuperscript{16} through religious association have found support within the nation-state for as long as it has existed. In recent years, the Islamist movement has been a prevalent force within the Turkish “secular” government, bringing into the sphere of political discussion an appreciation for free speech and civil liberties previously ignored by their laicist predecessors. The AKP soothes the previously splintered identity of the majority of Turkish citizens, and its Islamic influence has prepared the framework of tolerance required for entrance into the European Union, admittance to which can only bring Turkey more prosperity in the future.
As you will be noticing, he'll be re-telling some of the trivia that he told us about Turkey.

Günaydın.
That's "Good Morning" in Turkish, to your information.

By the way, we were in Turkey.

If you have any questions, we will be defining this later... certainly...

By the way, coffee was discovered by a shepherd...

*yawn*

*chomp*
*chomp*

*shuffle*
*shuffle*

*chomp*
*chomp*

*chomp*
By the way, the first man to fly was actually a 17th century Turkish man, who flew all the way across the Bosphorus...

Aiyeeeee...

Meh, close enough...

*sploosh*

By the way, Ayran is a very popular Turkish drink...

What’s it made of?

Yoghurt and salt water.

?  ...

Yeah... We’ll pass.
By the way, at the ancient hospital of Asklepion, they only used to take patients they could cure...

Help...

Hmm...

Sorry, it's a pre-existing condition.

One of the treatments was to drink the groundwater, which has recently been discovered to be radioactive...

Here, drink this.

Feel better?

Yeah...

They also used hypnosis to calm and "cure" patients...

Hey, Johnocles, you're out of the hospital.

Uh... wait, are you actually better?

Yeah, of course!
Turkey is a young country founded on ideals of nationalism and progressivism, and both the Turkish government and its culture heavily emphasize the concept of a national identity. This concept first became popularized during the founding of the Republic of Turkey, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the subsequent occupation of Ottoman territories. A general named Mustafa Kemal led the fight for independence that ended in modern-day Turkey’s formation in 1923, and for that he was (and still is) idolized, taking on the surname Atatürk – “Father of Turks” – and becoming the nation’s first president. By the end of his fifteen years in office, Atatürk had done much to modernize Turkey, introducing reforms ranging from adopting a Western alphabet to implementing a democratic model of government. Having died in 1938, he is still revered as a war hero, a politician, and—most importantly—as the father of Turkey.

However, there was a contradiction in Atatürk’s national ambitions that continues to divide Turkish politics and culture today. Atatürk stressed the need for a Turkish identity – a cultural bond founded on unity, nationalism, and a common past – while at the same time reforming so many aspects of Turkish society that it became virtually unrecognizable compared to its Ottoman past. The consequences of this contradiction can still be seen today from the neighborhoods of Istanbul to the political parties in Ankara. As the political and social gears that Atatürk set in motion propel Turkey forward, divergent interpretations of what it means to be Turkish have divided the nation’s populace.

This is first evident in the sharp divisions between Istanbul’s neighborhoods. When walking through the trendy university neighborhood surrounding Bogazici University, one is confronted with a familiar scene. Coffee shops and bookstores line the street and, even in midwinter, some girls wear short shorts. But just a ten-foot alley away, one is plunged into Fatih, one of the oldest Muslim neighborhoods in Istanbul, in which the five-times-daily prayers toward Mecca are strictly observed and the hedonism of Western culture is looked down upon. Which of these neighborhoods better embodies the Turkish identity: The progressive university scene that reflects the Westernization and educational advancement Atatürk envisioned, or the conservative district in which Turkey’s spirituality and history is rooted?

These divisions are even more apparent on the political level. Rather than stabilizing into a two- or three-party system like most democracies do over time, Turkey’s political arena has, since its founding, grown to include nine major
political parties and scores of lesser ones. Upon examination of each party’s central ideals, it becomes apparent that most of the parties’ disagreements stem from different views on which of Atatürk’s reforms are most important and should be a political focus and which reforms should go by the wayside or even be abandoned (though parties that stray too far from Atatürk’s political vision are often disbanded).

The Nationalist Movement Party, for example, stresses the importance of Turkish nationalism, but is wary of over-Europeanization. Its occasional political opponent/ sometimes ally, the Democratic Party, instead focuses on driving forward the visions of Atatürk while still maintaining ties to Islamic culture. Meanwhile, Turkey’s oldest party, the Republican People’s Party (founded by Atatürk himself), clings to a literalist interpretation of Atatürk’s secularist ideologies. But the political party with the most power in Turkey’s current government is the Islamist faction known as the Justice and Development Party, whose political tenets are furthest from those envisioned by secularist Atatürk.

These increasingly divided political visions and social realities make it impossible to find a single cultural background or set of ideologies that characterizes the Turkish identity of Atatürk’s vision. Instead, the Turkish population is comprised of a medley of different ethnicities and cultures with a variety of beliefs, practices, and political views. Rather than acknowledge this fact and accept the social multiplicity of Turkey, the Turkish government still clings to the ideal of a unified Turkish identity that exemplifies what it is to be truly Turkish. This idea, though powerful in concept, proves to be naïve in practice, as more and more political, social, and ethnic groups feel alienated and misunderstood by a government trying to fit their individual cultures into an artificial mold.
Selective Regulation in Turkey: A Society of Dichotomy

Daniel Ehrlich

It should come as no surprise to anyone that Turkey is different from the United States. The way people pray, eat, work, and live are all different. At no time is this as apparent as when walking through the bazaars of Turkey, moving between small, poorly lit stalls and then bursting back onto a main street with western-style shops, only to once again plunge into a dark alley. One begins to wonder how this stark disparity came to be. The standardized businesses of the United States stand in contrast to this extremely varied marketplace. I found myself asking what it was about Turkey that created such a different society from the one I was used to. How could, one block from a McDonalds, stand a seemingly never ending row of informal Turkish family-run businesses? Before I went to Turkey, I would have brushed off Turkey’s informal economy as a peculiar cultural feature, a foreign influence on Turkey’s more western-styled formal economy. Now, however, I know to avoid that trap. Turkey’s informal economy is far more than a vestigial cultural appendage. It is a predictable consequence of economic regulations and social realities.

To simply provide a baseline of the shape of the Turkish marketplace: 97 percent of all enterprises are classified as small enterprises, and 67 percent of the workforce is employed by small enterprise. The majority of Turks decide to work outside of major corporate industries, preferring either self-employment or small-scale employment in small shops. Despite this data, however, it would be false to say that major corporations do not play a meaningful role in the Turkish economy. Although they do not employ much of the citizenry in Turkey, large enterprises actually comprise over 70 percent of the manufacturing value added to their GDP. This would seemingly raise a contradiction. However, when we analyze the rules and regulations of the Turkish marketplace, how exactly this pattern has developed becomes readily apparent.

It might be strange to assert, but the Turkish government’s greatest influence on its economy is its decision not to assert influence. Despite a recent push...
to formalize the economy, the government generally leaves businesses to choose whether to follow the regulations set in place. This creates a very obvious divide between the formal economy, those businesses that generally following the rules and regulations set in place by the government, and the informal sector, which largely operates outside of the government supervision. The Turkish government makes little effort to enforce employment and safety regulations, or to police the filing and paying of taxes. With the ability to skip out on all of these procedural difficulties and save tax money, it should come as no surprise that many businesses opt to remain small, informal enterprises. This decision, however, comes with effects of its own, including a lack of extensive record keeping. This usually means that cash flow and inventory are matters of trust, rather than law. In reality, this means that business owners tend to want to remain with their stores, and hire only people whom they firmly believe they can trust, resulting in a large proportion of businesses being family owned and operated. The seemingly simple decision of the Turkish government not to enforce regulations on small businesses has far-reaching effects on the people of Turkey and the ways they choose to run their businesses and live their lives.

With the government deciding not to enforce tax laws, one might wonder why any Turkish businesses would pay taxes. This question leads to another outstanding influence on the Turkish economy. Although there are added costs to undergoing business formalization, there are also benefits. The official status granted by the government to businesses in good standing allows them access to credit and loans. This is why all of the businesses that choose to remain informal tend to be quite small. Without access to credit, it is difficult to acquire the capital necessary for large-scale growth. This is what creates the disparity in business sizes in Turkey. Owners, understanding that the cost of formalization is quite high, only endure the process when the prospect of their companies growing large and profitable is highly probable. This is necessary because, if a company were to begin paying taxes and not lift above its informal rivals, it could not compete with their lower costs. The only way these businesses contend with these low-cost rivals is to corporatize quickly and utilize economies of scale to compete. This is what is responsible for the lack of many obviously mid-sized businesses in Turkey.

In this small example, we begin to see that the whole of Turkish society should be looked at not simply through a cultural lens, but through a regulatory mindset. The rules of the marketplace and their enforcement by the Turkish government impact Turkish society and the lives of the Turkish people in very real and extremely profound ways. The decision not to tax small businesses reliably has created a society where most are contented to stay in their relatively safer, small market enterprises and avoid the costs that growth would entail. Similarly, restricting loan access to formal businesses ensures that only those with stored capital assets will succeed in producing the major corporations necessary to power their economy. To simply view the Turkish marketplace as a cultural dynamic would be to misunderstand the very significant role modern economic policy plays in shaping Turkish society.
While in prison in 1945, Nâzım Hikmet, a prominent modern Turkish poet, wrote poems every night between nine and ten o’clock; compiled in his collected works, those poems articulate a deep longing for what was outside of the prison walls—his wife, his people, his country. Therefore, while in Turkey, I wrote my own set of 9–10 PM poems. Though I’m not Turkish and certainly don’t presume to know the culture based on a two-week trip to Turkey, these poems serve as a useful analogue to contextualize myself in the culture and note my first impressions. The first three poems are examples of the fifteen-poem series.

The final three poems are based upon places to which we traveled. Pergamon is an ancient Greek acropolis located near the modern-day city of Bergama. Gallipoli is an area in European Turkey, most known for a devastating battle during World War I (the Allied powers had more than 140,000 casualties, while Ottoman Turkey had over 250,000). Sirince is a very small town in the mountains of the Izmir region of Turkey where farming is the primary means of income.

Poems for Turkey
Nicholas Glastonbury

I walk my carpets in
empty shoes, dangling barely
across its surface.
I am Roma:
I am thief.

I cannot fill the things I steal.

Furrows in my skin they fill with waste
and I am the dirty
sidewalk I sit on.

Slowly you steal my name, it disappears
under whitewash. It is replaced

with kerosene and matches.

Gifts are spent faster than what’s stolen:

Keep my name. I will fill your shoes.
this dagger was my
father's father's father's

and see
the blade is still sharp
even to carve capers out of the ground and out of the ruins

sometimes even oregano
and I get fifty kurus' for that.

my father was taken southeast
and he's still coming home

one day
from the

Kurdish menace plaguing the nation

maybe.

I play tag in Asklepiion
with brother and

everything is broken there
knocked over columns
and halfway stairs

this is what is Türkiye,
this broken

and my papa could fix them
these stones he could fix them.

they'd stand right

I miss him

Kurdish menace plaguing the nation

oregano would grow
everywhere and
abundantly

it would and
he'd cut the oregano with his
father's father's dagger
he would

i The Turkish equivalent of cents.
ii An ancient hospital located in Bergama, built adjacent to both a military base and a small village.
it is proof enough that you are a man if (only if) you know how to make the right kind of sugar bowl.

it is proof enough that you are a man if you marry good and proper dowry for sugar bowl and you make the pots pans bowls vases just to be proof enough that you belong to this family as a man a business man a manly family man.

just make ceramics and don’t look at the man who looks at you equally and with the eyes of a man.
PERGAMON
to be something so long as
to be inevitable.

ruin is misnomer—
nothing
is righter
than what is

no more discernible from the
landscape

there were once blood
stains painted by absolute gods
(who too have now
faded).

though stones topple,
awe remains, and
though religions die
mystery still hangs
in the air.

to be destroyed is
to be (inevitably)
beautiful

GALLIPOLI
DULCE ET DECORUM EST
climbing for this shameful honour

these dusty crags
carving blue pocked with green
trees bearing forth;—

these wine dark permutations
full of fish and fishermen who feed
children
to make hungry homes full

and you who climb Jacob’s ladder
to nobility
and become
acclaimed fodder for cannons
and become
utterly inhuman canonized apart
from your vague complexities
which are really just iniquities

ascension too fake too real

irony of death and dying
in the utter sublime
(Our beloved son)

it is a green blue wine dark
world which

you must climb
dreamlike
unfeel the untruth at the peak
you must ascend
PRO PATRIA MORI

ŞIRINCE (A.K.S.)
I ate the oranges tonight
and cried. I’m not sure if
you picked them for me
or I did.

I ate the oranges.
And when the globe in my hand was
gone,
my fingers sticky, my tongue
stinging,

I cried. It was the very last of the
oranges,
the very last,
and now I’m sorry
with the day they’re
gone.

iii “Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori,” a
line from Ancient Roman poet Horace’s Odes,
roughly translates to English as, “How sweet
and honorable it is to die for one’s country.”
Theatre is my life. As an active actor, viewer, and producer of shows throughout New York City, I live and breathe the theatre. And so, during my time in Turkey, I instantly gravitated toward any Turkish theatrical production I found. The first thing I noticed about Turkish theatre is that I did not notice it. I searched for one specific theatre in Istanbul for at least a half an hour before stumbling upon its entrance, hidden between a deli and a convenience store. For someone who is used to the bright lights and large signs of Broadway, recognizing this discrete door as the entrance to a theatre was a challenge. But once I entered the theatre, I found the curtain pulled open to reveal a view of the Turkish government’s desires for its nation.

Almost immediately upon asking about visiting a theatre, I was informed by our tour guide, Denizhan Pekoz, that almost all theatre in Turkey is government run. Devlet Tiyatrolari, or the Turkish State Theatre, is a part of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It is responsible for the majority of theatrical productions in Turkey. The organization produces shows throughout Turkey and serves as a line of communication from the government to its people. Watching this line of communication illuminated several intentions and ideas of the Turkish government that, prior to my viewing, had been hidden behind a screen.

I remember instantly being impressed by the grandeur of the first show I saw, Genç Osman. I sat in my seat holding my ticket (which cost only four Turkish lira, or $2.46), expecting to get exactly what I had paid for. Considering that even the cheapest community theatre productions in the United States usually cost at least five dollars, I wasn’t expecting much of anything. So when the house lights dimmed, and the stage was taken over by a large cast of military men dressed in elaborate costumes accompanied by professional lighting and sound, I was incredibly impressed. A professional-level theatre production cost less than my morning coffee. I was hooked. This combination of cheap ticket prices with professional-quality productions can be attributed to the government-run nature of Turkish theatre. The government’s goal is to spread its messages and culture through theatre. Making tickets cheap and accessible is vital to this spread of ideas.

As the play was performed entirely in Turkish, I had to pay special attention to the audience response and visual elements of the show to understand the action. What I gathered from these observations was the enormous amount of Turkish pride displayed in the production of Genç Osman. Visually, aurally, and character-wise, the show was burst after burst of pride. The show opened with, and was consistently punctuated by, actors playing soldiers of the Ottoman army. They wore elaborate costumes and carried both traditional Ottoman flags and the contemporary Turkish flag. Rather than create a historically accurate image, the production used the flags to connect the greatness of the Ottoman Empire with the Turkish state. Backing up the military were loud and proud military marches. Even without understanding the dialogue, I could not help but feel an increased liveliness and excitement in the theatre.

Genç Osman tells the story of a
young Ottoman emperor, Osman, who was killed by the Christian Janissaries. After I watched the show, Denizhan informed me that Osman is a beloved figure for the Turkish people. Throughout the show, in costume and design, Osman took on an almost godlike stance. While the show ends with Osman’s horrifically realistic hanging, in traditional theatrical fashion Osman is “resurrected” during the bows. His reappearance received an enormous amount of applause and cheers from the audience. This familiar figure of pride has gone through death and been reborn into new life. In a similar fashion, the Ottoman Empire would eventually fall, and from its ashes would rise the Turkish state. Genç Osman claims this as Turkey’s history, and leaves the audience with heightened pride for their state.

Of course, not every Turkish show takes a prideful approach toward the Turkish state. The second show I watched, Kod Adi Kongo, was a political satire that drew attention to contemporary issues. Currently, a major issue in Turkey is the government’s desire to join the European Union. Turkey has been attempting to gain European acceptance for decades, and while their application has not been turned down, they have yet to be admitted into the European Union. The bitterness at this lack of acceptance was present throughout this show. Kod Adi Kongo was about the Congo’s relationship with Europe. In the play, Europeans came into the Congo and accepted the Congo into the European community. However, these Europeans ended up being corrupt and completely mismanaged the country until the Congo was all but destroyed. While the subject matter was dark and the attitude bitter, the show was performed as a comedy.

What I loved about Kod Adi Kongo was how much of the humor I actually understood. Through tone and common humorous characters, there were several points during the show where I actually laughed with the audience. While the show was performed almost entirely in Turkish, there were moments where the characters would stand and say a line in English. Their tone, in these moments, was incredibly mocking, and fairly funny. The characters in the show also felt familiar. The female lead relied on physical and often idiotic humor. For me, she appeared as a Turkish manifestation of the typical Fool. This character called up images of the Fool from Shakespeare’s King Lear, Jacques Clouseau from The Pink Panther, Jar Jar Binks from Star Wars, and several other popular, humorous figures. Another familiar figure was the European boss. In the final scene, the big European boss came to inspect the government offices of the Congo. He was excessively proud, and completely ignorant of the chaos that he was creating around him. Throughout this scene, the one face that came to mind was Michael Scott from The Office. All of these elements were incredibly familiar and funny to my foreign eyes. I also must admit, I felt a little uncomfortable when I realized I was laughing at a complete mockery of the West. The Turkish government used this humor to take a central issue and spin it back on to the Europeans for Turkish audiences to see.

The familiarity of humor in Kod
Adi Kongo made me pay attention to the connection between Turkish theatre and the Western theatre with which I am familiar. While the government's differing levels of involvement made me completely distinguish the two at first, the closer I got to the stage, the more connections I began to see. At the Turkish theatre, no one spoke to me in English. I had to rely on my limited Turkish – and charade skills – to try and communicate with the box-office workers and ushers. However, my knowledge of Western theatre's pre-show protocol worked perfectly with the way the Turkish shows were run. The doors were opened and ushers directed people to their seats. When the show was about to begin, a bell was rung, and an announcement was made that I can only assume was for cell phones to be turned off. The house lights were dimmed, silencing the audience and signaling the start of the show. At intermission, the audience filed out to use the bathroom and discuss the show before another bell signaled the start of the second act. This format can be found in almost any theatre across America. I also noticed similarities in the types of shows. In the lobbies of the theatres, I noticed several advertisements for Turkish versions of Western stories. There were Turkish versions of Don Giovanni, Pinocchio, Chronicles of Narnia, and King Lear. While I was not able to see one of these Western-influenced stories staged, I was able to recognize a Western influence on the performance style in the shows I attended. The influence I noticed comes from the intertwined history of Turkish and Western theatres.

Turkish theatre began to develop in the mid- to late-nineteenth century during the end of the Ottoman Empire. At this time, the popular theatrical form in America and Europe was drama that used music to add to the emotion of scenes. These were called “melody dramas” or, more commonly, “melodramas.” This melodramatic style eventually went out of fashion in the West, but was very prominent in both of the Turkish plays I saw. The acting was incredibly stylized and the music was prominent in setting the tone during the scenes and transitions. While the language of the theatre was different, at moments the similarities were so strong that I felt like I was back in a Broadway house.

The government's sponsorship of theatre in Turkey is very beneficial for Turkish arts, as it provides the theatre artists with money they often lack, allowing for cheap tickets and making the art incredibly accessible. However, it can also mean that artists refrain from creating work that might be controversial and potentially banned. Whether positive or negative, the government-run theatre makes transparent the desires and opinions of the Turkish government, as well as the message it wants to send to its citizens. The complicated Turkish pride, desire to be a part of the Western community, and bitterness toward this rejection are all present in the Turkish performances I witnessed. While these ideas were present throughout the trip to Turkey, they were revealed in their fullness on the stage.

On the surface, my visits to the theatre were trips to a familiar territory, but they also brought me closer to Turkey's views of identity and revealed more of the Turkish government's desires than seen from off the stage. The curtain was not only opened on a theatrical production, but also on a view of the Turkish government normally only seen by its citizens.
Turkey occupies a vast amount of land and encompasses a variety of ethnic groups. As it vies for the approval of Western European nations – particularly through potential membership in the European Union – Turkey must unite its many peoples and create a sense of identity to which all of its people can feel they belong.

There was one small village, Şirince, on the Western Aegean coast of Anatolia, where the diversity I had experienced in other locations seemed to evaporate. This village, presented to tourists as “typically” Turkish, represents an essential identity that Turkey is attempting to create and display to tourists and Turks alike. For the Turks, a weekend trip to Şirince means a chance to experience and celebrate their “cultural foundation,” or at least the foundation upon which the Turkish government has decided to base “Turkish Identity.” For foreign tourists, Şirince represents a quaint and seemingly authentic image of traditional Turkish village life. Both meanings are, however, skillfully constructed.

The photographs that follow were all taken of women in Şirince who were selling various goods produced in the village. One woman was selling bread (ekmek) fresh from her oven; another was sewing decorative wool socks to sell to visitors; and the last was selling olives and wild berries from the region surrounding the village. These are the women of Şirince Village, covered in headscarves, presenting – and selling – Turkey.
How’s the homeland?” My grandfather asked me over international phone lines while I stood in a rug showroom in the Cappadocia region of Turkey. “It’s great!” I replied. “The Turks have been so nice to me.” He sighed and explained to me in his forgiving, grandfatherly tone: “Of course they have, Sima, they don’t know what they did.”

This was the most sympathetically I’d ever heard my grandfather talk about Turkish people. Before I left on the trip, he frequently told me to be careful, and not tell anyone there that I was Armenian. As the child and grandchild of Armenian refugees of the 1915 genocide, I have grown up with less-than-sympathetic ideas about the Turks and the creation of their nation state.

Before I left on the trip, I built up all these expectations about what it was going to be like to be an Armenian-American experiencing Turkey—a country where my ancestors had lived for ages, and yet a place where my grandfather and grandmother had never set foot. I wondered if the events of the 1915 genocide would be visible in the Turkish people’s faces, if I would see all sorts of cover-ups of an unwanted history, if I would experience antagonism against my Armenian descent (or defense of Armenian history). I built up all these ideas in my head: that by going to Turkey as an Armenian-American, I was going to understand why her grandparents were treated unfairly, abused, and detained, only to suddenly discover the overwhelming and omnipresent issue of black and white racial relations in America. In Turkey, I learned for the first time about the Kurdish question. The Kurds are said to make up an estimated 20 percent of the Turkish population and they have faced all sorts of struggles throughout the development of the Turkish nation-state: they are not formally recognized as a minority (unlike Armenians), they were not allowed for years to speak their language, and the Kurdish “freedom fighters” in the East of Turkey have been deemed terrorists and fight daily, bloody battles against the Turkish army.

When we went to TESEV (The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation), a non-governmental organization working for democratization on behalf of minority rights, I asked Serkan, one of their organizers, about Armenians in Turkey. He said that the Armenian population was small (estimated to be between 20,000 and 40,000) and not very active in defending themselves. He said that the Armenians were more concerned with opening the border between Turkey and Armenia for trade.

A young Kurdish activist I met in Istanbul explained that “the Armenian question” was sort of a dead question. No one really heard from Armenians much. They were sort of the quiet, poor workers who were too poor to fight and just sought to blend in with the Turks. Events like the 2007 assassination of Hrant Dink, a Turkish-Armenian editor critical of Turkish denial
of the 1915 genocide and the Armenian Diaspora’s approach, have subdued the Turkish-Armenian population that is, for the most part, located in Istanbul.

When Deniz Pekoz, our Turkish-government-certified tour guide, briefly touched on the Armenian question, his answer was essentially:

I have an Armenian relative. What happened was that there was a mass migration. The Turkish government says that it made a mistake. Certainly. But only because the migration happened in the winter. But it was a mass migration and the populations changed and, certainly… that is what happened.

And yet it was not only Turks who wanted the Armenian question dropped. There is a large divide between American-Armenians (who have been fiercely advocating for the United States to formally recognize the events of 1915 as genocide), and native and Turkish-Armenians, who just want the issue dropped so that they can freely trade again, reboot their economy, and achieve reconciliation with the Turkish government.

I found myself in a bizarre situation: I was an all-American Armenian girl, who grew up teaching all of her friends where Armenia is on the map, what the Armenian genocide was, reading her great-grandmother’s diary from the genocide, with its lists and lists of friends and relatives who were brutally murdered, and yet I enjoyed all of the pleasures of an average, middle-class American existence. I went to Turkey, ready to defend “my people.” I was ready to challenge all these Turks and their denial of what they did to Armenians, and yet… I came away confused about the right approach to take. Should I let old wounds scar over? Should I allow Turks to deny history so that they don’t have to “give back property and pay reparations,” as Deniz explained frankly? Should I let Turkish-Armenians and Armenia figure out this issue in whatever way helps them most? Should I continue to question every Turk I meet on the Armenian genocide?

Part of me believes that I have no right to tell people across the world what they should and should not include in their history. And yet another part of me feels like I can never let this issue drop. It seems to me that the Armenians are not in a very good position to stand up for themselves. Armenians used to be numbered an estimated 2 million in Turkey prior to World War I, but it is said that 1.5 million Armenians died between 1915 and the end of World War I.3 It would seem that, given the relative population similarities, the Kurdish people would view the genocide of the Armenians and subsequent denial as a dangerous precedent to their current situation.

Armenia is a devastated country. Not just because of what the country lost in the genocide, but because it is also a land-locked country, ostracized by and cut off from almost all of its neighbors, and still recovering from the effects of a devastating earthquake in 1988 that killed up to 45,000 people, left 500,000 homeless, and devastated its natural resources.4 Turkish-Armenians are poor, displaced, repressed, and, for the most part, unrepresented in the Turkish government. Many of them are illegal workers in Turkey. It seems to me that a population that is cornered in such a desperate situation would logically fold to any government that pressures them. But should I, too?
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk once said, “Culture is the foundation of the Turkish Republic.”1 His reforms attempted to create a singular Turkish identity by defining what it meant to be “Turkish.” He did so by mandating specific cultural values and practices that would reflect national unity and pride. He aimed to “transform the social and mental structure of the past and to eradicate irrational ideas, magical superstitions, and religious beliefs which provided obstacles to economic and social progress.”2 Atatürk attempted to wipe away elements of peoples’ identities by law, denying their unique pasts in favor of a uniform future. I chose to choreograph a dance in response to this because I see our bodies—the way we hold ourselves, walk, go about daily tasks, take up space, and move in relation to one another—as essential to our identities.

The dance is organized in sixes, evoking what became known as “The Six Arrows,” the principles that guided Atatürk’s formation of the Republic of Turkey: Republicanism, Nationalism, Populism, Reformism, Etatism, and Secularism.

Atatürk believed cumhuriye (“Republicanism”) to be the “form of government that ensures the most modern and logical application of the principle of democracy.”3 Milliyetçilik (“Nationalism”), as the Kemalists used it, refers to the idea that “one’s nation is greater than one’s life.”4 Halkçilik (“Populism”) is the idea that “recognizes the single equal being called the people.”5 Inkilabçilik (“Reformism”), often translated as “Revolutionism,” refers to attempts at “social metamorphosis.”6 People who were considered inkilâbci were devoted to modernization, the rapid transformation of Turkey into a voice in the “European chorus of nations (Turkey is currently trying to gain admittance into the European Union).”7 Devletçilik (“Etatism”), also known as “Statism,” is a “strategy of state intervention in all social, economic, cultural, and educational activities,” as well as a political theory promoting the sovereignty of the national state rather than the individuals comprising it.8 Layiklik, translated as “Secularism,” does not necessarily refer to the differentiation between “religion and the world.”9 Derived from the French word laï, Layiklik is more closely characterized as a differentiation between “the people,” who may still hold religious beliefs, and “the clergy,” the “religiously wise.”10 These six values are the pillars of Kemalism developed by Atatürk and his followers.

In my dance, the dancers have no choice but to remain conscious of the patterning of sixes. They must keep mental count in order to execute their movements at the correct time. Though the quality of movement is different for each phrase, there are no auditory clues indicating when each new phrase begins or ends. A clock ticking, a bell chimed six times in total at thirty second intervals, and the sound of their own bodies are all that the dancers and audience hear. The six phrases do not correspond directly to “The Six Arrows” of Kemalism, but I had them in mind while choreographing.

“Mo(u)rn” is a phrase performed primarily at the beginning of the piece. I choreographed this phrase around the idea of waking up. Atatürk’s reforms were viewed as the beginning of the Republic of
Turkey. However, the movement could not be characterized as “fresh.” It is weighted, filled with energy but not overt excitement. The dancers start on the ground and get up to make their way around the stage. Though at times they are moving in unison or spatially very close together, they do not acknowledge each other.

The movement of “Alphabet” was directly inspired by Arabic script. The arms, legs, torso, hips, head, hands, and feet move to create the fluid shapes of the different letters, transforming the visual into the kinesthetic. We communicate with our bodies just as we can communicate with our words. Atatürk banned Arabic script, replacing it with the Latin alphabet. I derived the movement of this phrase from Arabic script to keep myself limited to a specific movement vocabulary that I was unfamiliar with, trying to imagine what it might feel like to have something so essential to my daily life—my language—taken away and replaced with something foreign to me.

“Folk’ March” is a phrase meant for

How to Read the Score: Each square represents a single dancer during a specific thirty-second interval. The quality of the line indicates which phrase of movement the dancer will be doing and the “x” designates the place on stage that the movement will start. For example, starting from the upper left hand corner, the box that is second on the right and two boxes down shows “Dancer 2,” who is female (“F”), starting the phrase called “Mo(u)r” center stage. Partially or completely empty squares mean that the dancer will be offstage. Squares that contain only an “x” indicate that the dancer is on stage but is not moving.
three male dancers. I am not an expert on Turkish Folk Dance; the movement is derived from articles I have read and video footage that I have watched of various regional Turkish Folk dances. This phrase comes at the end of the piece because it was a part of the unified identity that Atatürk wanted to assert. Though there was “no single national Turkish dance,” Atatürk attempted to popularize zeybek throughout the country. Zeybek is traditionally performed by men and was purportedly created by warriors imitating the movement of hawks.12

“’Bellydance,’” like “’Folk’ March,” consists of movement that I created based on research I did into the bellydancing tradition. The roots of Turkish belly dance come from the Roma (“Gypsy”) people. It was seen as “undignified,” and was traditionally performed by “non-Turks”—“Roma, Greeks, Albanians, Circassians, and Jews.”14 Though Atatürk favored “folk dances and classical ballet” over belly dance, today it is performed by Turkish women for tourist audiences.15

During “Walking,” dancers simply walk across the stage starting and ending at specific places on stage indicated in the score. The way that we walk shows a lot about who we are—which part of our body we initiate movement from, where we hold tension, whether we prefer to start on the left or right foot, whether we have been trained in a specific form of movement, if we think of walking as a “thing” in and of itself, or if we view it as simply a way to get somewhere. Dancers may walk however they feel moved to, exposing an element of human individuality that we usually take for granted. Atatürk attempted to homogenize the Republic of Turkey culturally, but despite his many reforms, the country is still incredibly diverse.

“Dressing” consists solely of taking off and putting on clothing. The dancer starts with a pile of clothes to her right. She begins to put them on, layering them on top of each other. Each time she decides to take off an article, she discards it to her left. She may pause whenever she wants to, looking out at the audience but without focusing on any single person. By the end of the dance she will only be left with the clothing she started the dance in, and the pile of other clothes will be on her left. The way that we choose to present our bodies to the world each day is the way that we wish to identify ourselves or be identified. Atatürk made “hat and dress revolutionary changes” in which women were told to abandon the veil and men the fez because they were considered symbols of Islam.16 The dancers will wear whatever they wish to as long as they can still execute the movement. My dance is not meant to be neat, clean, or perfect; it is about movement and identity in everyday life. 

I met the Bandit Dog where the Aegean meets the city of Izmir. A young Italian couple saw him first, and the girl reached out to pat him on the head. He laughed and dodged her deftly, tongue lolling and teeth bared only half playfully. He was a big dog, a Great Dane mutt, black and white, a dark spot covering his left eye (hence his given name). He had slighted the girl, but I thought maybe I’d fair better. Slowly, I walked up to the great wolf of a dog, and outstretched my hand to say hi. He let me touch him for only a second, and then jerked his neck back, solid skull hitting my hand, scaring the hell out of me. But he wasn’t pissed. He ran in a little circle and looked up. “Let’s go.” So why not? If this handsome animal would have my company for a few minutes, I’d be flattered.

We followed the Bandit Dog along the coast on that night when the sea was rough. Heavy waves hit the smooth-cut granite blocks built to define where the city ends, turning geysers high into the air, blurring the lines and washing over onto the city sidewalks. We followed the Bandit Dog as he led a few feet ahead, looking back and grinning every once in a while. And then we parted ways, and I was left to miss my own dogs, back home in South Carolina.

One of the first things a tourist from New York City who has just landed in Istanbul might notice is how clean the city streets are; I don’t think I saw a single rat in any of the huge cities we visited in Turkey. A second, related thing would probably be all of the animals. Stray dogs and cats rival the pigeons, if not overtake them. Cats laze about in parks and scurry under the legs of café patrons. Dogs lie in Taksim Square keeping a look out for food and standing guard. I notice that all of the dog’s ears seem to be tagged. I don’t touch any of them, though on the whole they look relatively friendly, clean, and well fed.

We went to the Pudding Shop in Istanbul for lunch; it’s a tourist trap. Afterward we congregated on the sidewalk. A big, blond stray dog limped around us, looking up affably. His ear was tagged and I’m sure he got an awww from each person standing there, but no one touched him. And then, finally, what I had been waiting for happened. An older Turkish gentleman riding a bicycle down the crowded sidewalk stopped at our group. At first I was worried that the kind-looking man was going to “shoo” the dog away, but instead he began petting him. Though he spoke very little (heavily accented) English, I knew what he was saying: “You can play with him. Pet him. He’s friendly.” But I still held on to my reservation and the dog...
limped away. Later, with guilt, I asked our tour guide what the tags on the dogs’ ears were and he replied that, in Turkey, it is the responsibility of the municipality to tag, vaccinate, and neuter all of its stray dogs.

Another day we went to Nişantaşı, a more upper-class European shopping district in Istanbul. There, in a quaint park filled with abstract-art benches, I photographed the strays. There were at least a dozen dogs relaxing in this small park. Toward the back was a kind of cubby rack, like the slots you stuck your shoes in at the McDonalds play place: a cat box filled with lazy cats. Food had been laid out, meat on the bones to keep the dogs’ teeth strong and a ground mash of bread and meat for the dainty felines.

And then, somebody walked by with a dog on a leash. It wasn’t until we visited this area that I became conscious of something that had been confusing me since I’d been in Turkey. What is common on the streets of Manhattan seemed so out of place on the other side of the world.

This realization led me to a more thorough understanding of the city spaces of Turkey. Originally, with my own strongly Western ideas, I saw many unwanted animals on the city streets. Now I saw none. Come to think of it, I would imagine a Turkish citizen would be appalled at the number of “unwanted” men and women on the streets of New York City, as we saw very few homeless people in Turkey. According to our tour guide, this is because of very strong family bonds. No one ever loses touch with their family and no one would ever let a family member live on the street.

This value – care for living creatures, humans included – must have some root in Islam, since Turkey, while a “secular state,” is almost entirely Muslim. Even within strict interpretations of Islamic law, there seems to be varied opinions concerning the cleanliness of dogs. However, it seems the majority of Muslims believes dogs to be unclean in fur, saliva, or both. It is also, in fact, strictly prohibited to keep a dog for any
other reason than protection or hunting.\textsuperscript{1} So, regardless of varying interpretation, dogs are, at best, questionable. However, this is not the whole story. Dogs, as living creatures, are considered to be a part of the community – God’s Family – and must be treated kindly and with respect as creations of Allah.\textsuperscript{2}

When compared to these beliefs and the Turkish animal control system, American pounds seem more like prisons. While it could be argued that the American system provides the opportunity for adoption and a loving home, this isn’t even understood in the Turkish system. In Turkey, the very concept of “pet,” as it is understood by American culture, is rare. It makes no sense that cats or dogs would become lonely for want of human companionship (Though I can attest that one particular green-eyed Persian cat was very glad for my affection).

It was only after I had these experiences and reflected on them that I felt I began to understand the relationships many Turkish people have towards the animals around them. While people ultimately determine themselves to be the dominate species in both American and Turkish culture, I feel that the Turks have a much more passive view of the concept. Instead of forcing animals into the role of the thing at the end of a leash, as American culture arguably does, Turkish animals are permitted a bit more individuality. This asserts a belief that animals are, in fact, conscious living things deserving of simple kindness and decency. And I think this is consistent in the way that the animals are treated in Turkey. They are held to be a valued, though different, piece of the community of all living things, complete with their own roles, which in turn blurs the artificial lines between humans and nature. The concept of every living thing having a place in the community, while incorporated in the scientific data accepted by most Americans (i.e. food chains and niches), finds no true place in the spirit of everyday life in America. In Turkey, this belief, at least in part because of its foundation in Islam, makes its way to the surface in the very identity of the people so that it is unmistakable just by examining the space and inhabitants – human and otherwise – of a Turkish city.
On one of our early truck stop lunches, I noticed a prominent picture of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hanging over the counter (later we would realize his image is ubiquitous in Turkey, but it was surprising at the time). I had heard of the revolutions he brought to Turkey, but had yet to realize how significant his image actually was to the Turkish people. I examined the image, and noticed his eyebrows were perfectly sculpted and brushed out in a way that reminded me of one of my best friends at home, who brushes his own eyebrows out and happens to be gay. I remember turning to the person next to me and jokingly whispering, “Looks like Atatürk may have been one of us,” not realizing that, by insinuating that Atatürk was gay, I had just committed a felony.

After the picture at the truck stop, the next place Atatürk’s homosexuality came up was his mausoleum in Ankara. His extensive collection of beautiful silken robes, combined with the fact that he had a short-lived, tumultuous marriage, added to the transition from joking about his sexuality to genuinely questioning if this notion might be plausible. I thought I was a genius; I had figured out something about Turkish history that had never occurred to anyone else. However, I soon learned that I was not alone in my conjectures.

A question many Americans might ask is, “Why have I never heard of Atatürk?” The answer is actually quite simple. As a New York Times article explains, “Atatürk, whose name means ‘father of the Turks,’ was one of the most important figures of the twentieth century, but his story is not broadly known in the West, in part because his godlike status in Turkey has made it too politically prickly to tell.” The attitude toward him in Turkey mirrors the way homosexuality is treated: there is a constant and acknowledged presence, but neither can be openly spoken about without causing stress. In almost every restaurant, shop, or other establishment, there was a picture of either Atatürk or an Islamic crescent hanging on the wall, but I never felt comfortable asking about the pictures of Mustafa Kemal because of the intense reverence Turkish people have for this national hero. Similarly, I did not feel comfortable asking Denizhan Pekoz, our tour guide, about the images because his respect and pride for his country were apparent in everything he told us. Atatürk himself “set out to alter the mentality of his people – perhaps his most difficult task. He encouraged national pride, especially in the wake of military victory, and never tired of telling his countrymen that they should be happy to call themselves Turks.”

Therefore, national pride is not surprising. It balances the heavy presence of Islam, and helps to keep the country secular. But it also makes speaking openly about Atatürk difficult. Insulting Atatürk in any way is not only illegal, but possibly dangerous.

Any debate over Atatürk’s sexuality – and certainly any accusation of homosexuality – adds fuel to the fire. One of the biggest controversies in Turkey at the moment is the accusation that Atatürk may have been gay. Whether or not calling someone gay should be considered an insult is clearly a debatable issue; In the context of Turkey, the accusation that Atatürk was homosexual suggests that he was dishonest with the Turkish people, as well as the woman he married, possibly
to produce the façade of heterosexuality. Atatürk never admitted to same-sex attraction. However, there is a substantial amount of evidence that supports the claim that his alcoholism and divorce may have been spurred by his disinterest in women and discomfort in his attraction to men.

These accusations pop up in a few interesting places. One is YouTube, which has been banned in Turkey. When asked why, Denizhan told us that the popular website was blocked because Kurdish terrorists were posting dangerous videos, but he never mentioned the content of the videos that prompted the government to ban the entire website. As it turns out, kids of many different nationalities were putting up videos claiming Atatürk was gay and suggesting that, as a result, all Turkish people are gay. The videos were derogatory and had little factual content, using names such as “Mustafa Gay-mel.” Though they were ill-informed and malicious, the posts were in response to some earlier videos that clearly laid out facts supporting Atatürk’s alleged homosexuality. I believe it was those original videos that the Turkish government found most threatening, as they thrust a long-hidden topic into the public eye.

Searching through YouTube videos was interesting, but there are few ways to check the facts that many of the people present about Atatürk. The controversy does not end at these videos, but spreads to other mediums that the Turkish government has had problems trying to control. For instance, Belgian author Marie Arena penned a book titled Fight Against Homophobia that listed the “Fifty most influential homosexual and bisexual leaders in history” – including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. This caused an extreme problem within the Turkish government because officials had never publicly addressed the claims of Atatürk’s alleged homosexuality, and certainly had never given any sort of confirmation. Arena was forced to travel to Ankara and appear in front of the leaders of the country in order to make a public apology. Their reaction to her book is not surprising; the shocking part of the story is that she was so sure of his sexuality that she placed him in a book about gay leaders in order to encourage acceptance of homosexuality around the world. Instead, she was forced to apologize profusely for calling a famous leader gay, sending a much different message about whether or not same-sex attraction is something to be scorned. Belgium stands as one of the few countries in the world that allows gay couples to get married and adopt children, but Arena’s ordeal hurt her mission to show people that there is nothing wrong with homosexuality – a mission Turkey clearly did not agree with.

Understandably, I was shocked at the vibrant gay nightlife that existed in most of the cities we visited. Though very different from the scene in New York, it was accessible and widespread. This experience with the gay community made me notice that many people actually do hold the opinion that Atatürk may have been gay. Although Turkish gays have...
created a thriving community, it remains an unspoken issue that they receive few rights and cannot marry. In the "secular" nation of Turkey, this matter should be addressed, but controversies such as Arena’s book and the YouTube videos have made too strong a connection between Atatürk and homosexuality for the government to separate his image from gay rights in the minds of many Turks. Adding to the conjectures is the secrecy that has surrounded the diaries of Latife Usakligil, Atatürk’s wife of two years. In 1980, the government put a twenty-five year ban on releasing her diaries, but in 2005, the ban was renewed indefinitely, making many people wonder what could be hidden in her writings.

Perhaps Atatürk, in his commitment to making Turkey a Western “civilized” nation, used the flamboyant movie stars of the 1920s as his model for how a civilized man should look and act. However, his inability to sustain his marriage, coupled with his obsession with secularism and his rampant alcohol use, point to hidden motivations. The world may never know if Atatürk truly felt same-sex attractions, but it is interesting to think that every store in Turkey might have a picture of a gay man hanging on its wall: one more progressive step toward equality brought to Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.
This Poem Almost Wasn’t Mine
Libby Treu

Originally, my Mosaic project was going to take an exercise poet David Cameron performed with Baudelaire’s Les Fleurs du Mal – false translations on the basis of sound – and modify it for use with a book of Turkish poetry. After I returned home and began to research Attila Ilhan, the poet recommended to me in a Turkish bookshop, I found several articles he’d written denouncing translation. Instead of dishonoring the spirit and intention of his work, I decided to scrap that project and wrote this instead:

A Book Market in Istanbul

The best reason to learn a language is poetry he said and he gave me Attila Ilhan.

Jetlag

Bought evil eyes on key chains and almost bought boxes of Turkish Delight but the power went out at the market so I decided no on the food bought journals instead tiny things made to fit in purses and in pockets for small thoughts thought on buses and meant to write Turkey but instead wrote me.

A Lecture in Istanbul

I couldn’t tell you the politics of Serkan but I listened to his words and wrote poems for women and loved the curl of his hands and the way air left his lungs when he spoke.
Tourists

Bought a book of poetry in the book market and wanted to translate the words more familiarly but the poet said fuck you.

Hotel Lobbies

Got jealous in Izmir of nine o'clock poems – sorry Nick I dragged you out at eight not thinking and sadly you missed your poet's deadline.

An office in New York

Becky said academic paper but I hate encyclopedias the passive way knowledge sleeps on thin pages that wrinkle easily with ink that covers fingerprints and at least poetry is demanding.
The History of Language and the Language of History

Sarah Zapiler

Language is not only a powerful lever in social, cultural, and national development but it is a constant ingredient of such development and, in its realization as speech or writing, a powerful indicator of interaction networks, social situations, role-relationships, domains of aggregative activity, dominant value clusters, and national missions or symbols.

Joshua A. Fishman,
Language Problems in Developing Nations

History is inaccessible to us except in textual form [...] it can be approached only by way of prior (re)textualization.

Fredric Jameson,
The Political Unconscious

A shared past and a shared future are integral to the maintenance of nationhood in the individual consciousness. In order to establish a shared past, historiography, the writing of history, is necessary. Historiography serves two purposes: first, to delineate what is salient from the past, and second, to make that delineation communicable. While history, as some theoretically context-less fact, can be seen as the mass aggregate of all past events, a history upon which a nation rests requires certain past events to have meaning. Historiography stabilizes; of the countless possible ways history could be delimited from the innumerable events in the past, historiography makes definite a certain delimitation that rests on certain facts. This is a function of language. Language is a mechanism that both generates and sustains a bounding of the experience of the world. As the sign used to describe any designata bounds it, the national history becomes circumscribed by the language used to represent it. Historiography, then, is one of the most important tools for the stabilization of a national imagining -- functioning itself as a delimiting force. As language shapes the history, history shapes the nation. In the Turkish case, historiography fashioned a trajectory for the nation.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, revolutionary leader, founder and first president of Turkey, envisioned Turkey becoming "a full-fledged member of the contemporary civilized world, as it was represented by Western Europe."

In the wake of the Turkish War for Independence in 1923, Atatürk established a trajectory which would bridge the gap between the Oriental and Occidental worlds through linguistic and historiographical reform. According to Turkish academic and linguist Ozcan Baskan, the general goal of modernization can be seen as divided into four processes: anti-Islamic secularization, de-Ottomanization, pro-Westernization, and re-Turkification. In order to join the West, it was necessary for Turks to minimize the Islamic and Ottoman aspects of their language and history. In the formation of this narrative, Atatürk turned to Turkish antiquity -- the origin itself -- to legitimize and stabilize national imaginings. Atatürk's reforms called, linguistically, for a divergence from Arabo-Persian influence and a return to original Turkish, and, historiographically, for a glorification of Turkish antiquity. This
glance back to ancient times functions as inspiration: since our past is significant, so too will be our future.

In the writing of history, there was a systemic turn from the Islamic and Ottoman in favor of re-Turkification. Atatürk, who “was very interested in history,” established the Turkish Historical Society in 1931 to “promote interest and research in the national history of the Turks as distinct from merely Ottoman history [particularly] the pre-Islamic period of Turkish history.” The Turkish Historical Society was responsible for preparing a “comprehensive historical account of the Turkish people.” In several Congresses on Turkish history, it was “fervently argued that the textbooks translated from European languages did not serve the national interests, the knowledge they had of the Turks were deeply flawed and prejudiced and hence it was a grave necessity for the Turks to write their own history.” Simultaneous to this insistence on Turks articulating their own history was, as a result of linguistic reform, a change in how Turks articulated in general.

Original Turkish-speakers were members of “nomadic tribes that had inhabited the steppes of Central Asia since the dawn of history” who settled in Asia Minor by the tenth century. Many of these Turks converted to Islam, integrating Arabic and Persian terms, particularly ones related to literature, art, culture, and religion, into their Altaic language. Lexical influences from Arabic and Persian were accompanied by syntactic and morphological influences, resulting in interplay between three separate systems of grammar in Ottoman Turkish. Arabic script was also adopted, despite the fact that there were no characters for several Turkish phonemes and it “was poorly equipped to represent a language characterized by a thoroughgoing vowel harmony.” While these were practical reasons for linguistic reform, ultimately it was the desire to eliminate the Islamic and Ottoman in favor of the secular, Western, and Turkish that motivated Atatürk.

The true start of the “language revolution” began in 1928 with the “Alphabet Reform.” Abandoning the Arabic script of Ottoman Turkish in favor of the Latin alphabet, Atatürk pushed Turkish to be more easily integrated, both practically and symbolically, into the Western world. This transformation led to an implicit difficulty in maintaining Arabo-Persian vocabulary and grammatical constructions that could not be transliterated with the new orthography. This built-in phenomenon was accompanied by an active expurgation of Arabo-Persian terms in favor of Turkic equivalents, often resurrected synonyms from ancient texts or neologisms patterned on similar Turkic forms.

While the government executed these planning activities, the integration of those plans into actualized language necessitated a broad psycho-social reform. Psycho-social reform, as a whole, can be seen as the communication of idealized notions of nationhood and their assimilation and internalization in the national subject. Language, then, is not only an end of reform, but its constant means. Since language is the means of historiography and historiography is a means of nation building, nowhere is the import of language more obvious than in historiographical reform.

Atatürk made a list of topics that he wanted the Historical Society to undertake, including the origin of humans. As a result, the Society produced its main text, the Tarih (History), a four-volume textbook outlining history starting from the beginning of recorded time. The emphasis on the Turkification of history and the language of history is clear. When Atatürk first drafted the list of topics, he called for historians to address Beşeriyet menşe ve mebdei (The source and origin of humankind). All four of these words are from Arabic origin. When
the typescript was brought to Atatürk, he replaced his original language with *Insanların nereden ve nasıl geldikleri* (Where humans came from and how they came), in which three of the five words are Turkish. The consideration of the origins of the language of history was accompanied by concern for the origins of Turkishness. The notion of Re-Turkification inherently requires a delimitation of who and what is Turkish. The Historical Society did this most notably in the formation of the Turkish History Theory that defined the origin of Turkic peoples. In the words of historian Bernard Lewis:

> The theory propounded by Atatürk and his disciples was, briefly, that the Turks were a white, Aryan people, originating in Central Asia, the cradle of all human civilization. Owing to the progressive desiccation of this area, the Turks had migrated in waves to various parts of Asia and Africa, carrying the arts of civilization with them. Chinese, Indian, and Middle Eastern civilizations had all been founded in this way, the pioneers in the last-named being the Sumerians and Hittites, who were both Turkish peoples. Anatolia had thus been a Turkish land since antiquity.

Essentially amounting to an insistence that Turks were an ancient society that contributed directly to the evolution of civilization, the Turkish History Theory functioned as a pride-building tool in the new nation. The alleged origination of civilization was accompanied by a claim to the origin of language itself. The Sun-Language Theory, proposed by Atatürk in 1935 based on the research of linguist Hermann Kvergi, held that:

> …the birth of language resulted when ancient man first looked up at the sun, and uttered the sound ‘Ah’, followed by related sounds corresponding to fire, heat and so on. The Sun-Language Theory contended that the missing links could be found in the primitive Turkish language, thus making modern Turkish the closest equivalent to the first language spoken by man.

This served two purposes: first, to allow the cessation of the overambitious and practically challenging purist vocabulary replacement of the earlier movement since all words were Turkish in origin, and second, to enrich national pride. This bolstering of national pride is a result of the obsession with origin and origination that permeates Turkish historical and linguistic theory.

According to critical theorist Walter Benjamin, in historiography, “[the place of demonstrable explanation] is taken by interpretation, which is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way the sear embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world.” By solidifying the primacy of Turkish history, Atatürk created a shared past that seemed destined to become an important shared future in the national imagining. This
was the purpose of the *Tarih*: “to provide a view of the past that corresponded to the nationalist view of the present, and the future of the Turkish Republic.” The Turkish History Theory and Sun-Language Theory furnished this effort with evidentiary support for the glory of early Anatolian Turks, embedding them in the “great inscrutable course of the world.” These theories supported the “futurism” of the movement as well by establishing for Turkey a genealogy that originated with the foundation of civilization and language itself.

The language in which it is presented problematizes this seemingly continuous trajectory. “In creating the new language, the needs of days to come, and not historical continuity or the taste or convenience of the old generation, had to be the determining factor.” Accessibility of the past as it was, then, was not important. In a basic sense, the works of Turkish antiquity (esteemed in historiography) could not be intelligible to the modern Turk. This is, in one sense, why historiography is eminently important in Turkish self-identification. As the language continued to be revolutionized, the language of the revolution became inaccessible. For example, the *Tarih* and a six-day speech outlining the history of the revolution (*Nuntuk*), delivered by Atatürk in 1927, have both been translated several times from old Turkish to new Turkish. This idealized trajectory, therefore, was disrupted by the linguistic reforms that resulted in unintelligibility between the past, the present, and the future.
During the ride from the Atatürk International Airport, I sat on our tour bus with my white earphones in, watching the raindrops scatter on the silver surface of the Bosphorus. Signs declared Istanbul the “European Capital of Culture, 2010,” whatever that meant, really. Sound and space were one, and a song by Maps & Atlases played in my head: “Big Bopper Anthems.” I was running on the two hours of sleep I had gotten on the two thousand hour plane ride. It was nine in the morning and I was all adrenaline. “Uncertainty is as colorful as it’s going to get,” Dave Davison sang in my ear.

The next morning, eating my breakfast at the Crystal Hotel in Istanbul’s New City, I heard a most peculiar noise wafting from the nearest of twenty or so mosques I could see within a three-block radius. The Islamic Call to Prayer is the second piece on the playlist, because of its omnipresence on our trip. As uncertain and reckless as Maps & Atlases might have been, it had nothing on this strange little nation-state, where everyone is uncertain as to whether they’d like to be called secular or Muslim, European or Middle Eastern, represented by the Call to Prayer or pop music or both. I’m sure that if the peoples of Istanbul came to New York, the constant din of ambulance and fire engine would be nearly unbearable. It’s all relative.

In Istanbul, one issue nobody wanted to comment upon, besides Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s sexual orientation and the Armenian genocide, of course, seemed to be the Kurds. To try and summarize an enormously complicated Turkish political issue from the point of view of an American college student, I would say that the Kurds today find themselves in much the same position as the Black Americans did at the turn of the twentieth century; Turkey, a country trying to build itself upon some abstract notion of “true Turkishness,” calls them a problem. These Kurds, these non-Turks, seem to have no place in modern Turkey, just as non-whites lived a peculiar double life after Reconstruction. I can imagine W.E.B. Du Bois turning to the recently ousted Kurdish member of the Turkish government and saying, “How does it feel to be a problem?”

A group of us went to a club in Istanbul to see a Kurdish band called Grup Bajar, to hear and feel an example of a lost people’s music. Standing amidst a throng of cheering bodies in what could have passed for the Music Hall of Williamsburg, all I managed to think was: Grup Bajar sounds a lot like System of a Down – exactly like the American band System of a Down, except sadder, unfamiliar, more displaced. It didn’t even occur to me that all of the members of System of a Down were Armenian until Daniel reminded me. Armenian. Kurdish. You always bring a little bit of what you know into the unfamiliar, even if the unfamiliar is a club on Istiklal Street.

During the six hours here and nine hours there I spent on the tour bus, we would roll through mountains and clouds, down the Turkish countryside which one of my AGS-mates referred to as “just like Kansas, really.” I took my glasses off and stared out the huge bus windows at the passing landscapes, blurred like oil paintings. That cloud looks like a soldier’s helmet, I scribbled in my black, leather-bound journal.
After the hustle of the city of Istanbul, we passed and skipped and climbed over the ruins of Troy and Pergamum and Ephesus, giddy schoolchildren among the Turkish ruins. Death Cab for Cutie played like a lullaby inside my excited imagination: *murals of heroes defacing the blank concrete*. Feeling like a hero, I watched some small children, whose houses were built into the sides of mountains twenty feet from the ruins, run around the crumbling remains of the centuries-old hospital. I found myself wondering, before I ran screaming down the steep sloping steps of these ancient cities, how the people who would never want to live next to Kurds feel about building their lives on top of ruins. On the bus ride from the ruins to our hotel in Çanakkale, I put my headphones on and dozed to Dr. Dog's “The Old Days,” which was comforting and disconcerting, sleepy and sad and restless. *Let go of the old ones/We want some new ones/Hold on to the new stuff/And let go and get real tough.* I think I was homesick.

That morning, I got up early to watch the sun rise cloudily over the Aegean Sea.

A few days later, we were on our way out of Izmir, another coastal city. I said goodbye to the coast, to Kurdish and gypsy vendors who sat out on the warm piers, selling rosehips, baby rabbits in baskets, sleek black mussels with lemon.
Turkey, I spent a lot of time listening, listening, listening to sneakers slapping through mud, to everyone on the tour bus singing (or screaming) along to the *Glee* soundtrack and show tunes, to superstar Tarkan blasting from every restaurant in sight, and to the strange Staten Island/Turkish accents of a carpet vendor and pottery makers.

On the bus to the airport for our flight back to Istanbul, I drifted in and out of sleep. Outside the smudged window, I saw a horse carriage trotting between a BMW sports car and us on the highway. I laughed at some joke that seemed to be lost in translation, and stopped my iPod on a song by the Long Island band Bayside. I remembered that song in my ears months ago, walking home from Chinatown to Greenwich Village in the fall, the air around me all cold and colors. Faced with everything that I could possibly think of as weird or out of place, I was comforted. The song was called “I Think I’ll Be Okay,” and the lyrics themselves aren’t especially comforting or even especially cheerful. The memories that the song brought up in me (as equally odd and foreign as the highway carriage) fastened me somehow closer to the weird Turkish things that passed us by: a horse on the highway, a pack of stray dogs on the street, a heavy-set man trying to hustle me into buying his Turkish delight.

On our last day in Istanbul, I encountered a sign as I meandered to the Grand Bazaar which read, “In Turkey, you are beautiful.” Between packing and watching Turkish television in the hotel room, I felt as beautiful as the Izmir coast. I played The Beatles and Louis Armstrong and even a little bit of Tarkan and Grup Bajar to myself, humming along to the music of two young countries, Americanness and Turkishness. But for the next 24 hours, the only song in my head would be Simon & Garfunkel’s “America.” *I walked on to look for America...* 

I think I was most comfortable, feeling most in my element, when I had some form of Home to hold on to, an anchor to keep me grounded so I wouldn’t sink into my Otherness. One night, at a dive bar on Istiklal called Rock Bar, the owners played Fall Out Boy’s “Grand Theft Autumn,” and it was magical and kinetic. In the shitty pop-punk, I found some warm place in between the foreign and the exotic and myself. So I’m still looking for myself, but I think I might have found something on the European side of the Middle East.
“Oh, thank God, finally somebody who speaks English!” To the chagrin of many, Americans often leave the country not speaking a word of a foreign language and with the expectation that those they meet abroad will accommodate them by speaking English. In Europe, whether because of the close proximity of other nations or the emphasis on foreign language in education, bilingualism is much more commonplace. Luckily for Europeans, many European languages have influenced and evolved from each other throughout history, so that speaking Spanish in Italy, German in the Netherlands, or, certainly, Norwegian in Denmark will actually get you quite far.

Falling off the edge of the European continent and spanning the Anatolian Peninsula, the Turkish language remains quite the black sheep of European linguistics; it seems not to be related to anything. Despite its former use of the Arabic script and many borrowed Arabic words such as Merhaba (Hello), Turkish is not comprehensible to speakers of Arabic or any other Semitic language near Turkey. The absolute individuality of Turkish paired with its history and recently Occidentalized script has left the Turkish people with an enthusiastic linguistic pride. Speaking Turkish serves not only as a mode of interaction within Turkey, but plays a principal role in defining the Turkish peoples’ identity as a nation-state.

Nearly 1000 years ago, the Oghuz Turks introduced Oghuz Turkic to Anatolia after their migration to the Mediterranean from Central Asia. This westward advancement seems to have peppered the Turks’ route with related Turkic languages such as Azerbaijani and Uzbek, which remain the only languages we can classify as certain relatives of modern-day Turkish.1 Because the Ottoman Empire officially adopted Islam as its religion, the official language, Ottoman Turkish, became heavily influenced by Arabic and Farsi. Although these languages influenced the way educated Turks spoke, the lower classes continued speaking a cruder, more “Turkish” form of Turkish. Interestingly, it is this vernacular form that bears the most resemblance to contemporary Turkish.2

Much like the language, contemporary Turkish culture varies greatly from the past Turkish experience. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, warmly regarded as the “Father of the Turks,” strived for Turkey to reshape and fortify its own identity and urged the Turkish people to do the same. Declaring the state a secular nation, Atatürk realized that using an Arabic script in a world dominated by Western nations using Roman letters alienated Turkey from the secular Western world with which it wanted to associate. In 1928, as part of his cultural reforms, Atatürk introduced an adaptive Turkish alphabet to replace the passé Arabic calligraphy. Literacy in the country climbed and the Turkish people were generally happy to use an alphabet that reflected their spoken language more accurately than the linguistically unrelated Arabic script.3

Atatürk continued to revitalize the
Turkish language. In 1932, he created the Turkish Language Association, or TDK. With the goal of strengthening Turkish identity in mind, Atatürk and the TDK systematically replaced borrowed words from Arabic with invented, modern words coming from Turkic roots. Simultaneously, the government banned the press from using a list of loanwords. By force, the people of Turkey learned to speak differently – more Turkishly, if you will. The TDK plays a powerful role in shaping the Turkish language even today, remaining vigilant in their creation of Turkish equivalents for modern words and phrases.

Today, the Turkish language plays a pivotal role in shaping national pride. It has become illegal to use the Arabic script to represent the Turkish language, which reflects Turkey’s desire to part with its past as well as its government’s hope of appearing more Westernized. The new script has made literacy more accessible, facilitating access to Turkish literature and reinforcing national spirit.

Confronted every day with Western influences on the Turkish language, the TDK realized that it would be impossible, or at least highly impractical, to prevent and outlaw all forms of language borrowing. To compensate for the impossibility of keeping all foreign words outside of their lexicon, the most fervent Turkish language purists concocted “The Sun-Language Theory,” which cleverly asserts that all languages in the world must be descendants of the original Turkish language. Thus, sprinkles of foreign influence like the French-derived asansör (derived from ascenseur, which means “elevator”) remain innocuous because, as the theory suggests, it was a Turkish word first, anyway.

As the Albert Gallatin Scholars traveled around Anatolia, it became quickly apparent that most people in Turkey speak no English whatsoever. This was surprising to me in a metropolitan world city such as Istanbul; other foreign cities as large and urbanized, especially in Europe, seem to offer a higher prevalence of English proficiency. Could Turkish nationalism have an effect on the peoples’ desire to learn English? Without a doubt, as it is the lingua franca of the current era, it seems advantageous to speak English, especially considering Turkey’s repeatedly thwarted goal of joining the European Union and entertaining a wide array of western tourists. The Turkish people are generally very receptive to attempts, albeit flawed, of foreigners to speak their language, often laughing with us at our mistakes. I do, however, recall an interesting response to one of my botched questions in Turkish, somewhat epitomizing the Scholars’ impression of a zealous Turkish pride and even superiority complex: A restaurant owner said to me, “You should never try speak Turkish. Beautiful, difficult language. Too hard for other people.”
The mosques on Istanbul's skyline strike first with their visual beauty. From the bus, despite the embarrassing window glare, I couldn't resist taking pictures. The domes and spikes of minarets shamed whatever buildings lay around them, and that humbling force reached me even from far away. I thought: This is the East—this is Islam—and all my stock of personal cultural knowledge is distant, will fail me. I knew but a sample of the language. Looking into the eyes of a head-scarfed woman would have paralyzed me.

The minarets aren't strict ornamentation like steeples. When the Scholars were up on our luck, we'd be in earshot when an imam, the rough equivalent of a priest, would begin to call the pious Muslims to prayer. The minarets became instrumental then: loudspeakers attached near the tips of the tall, narrow towers broadcast the imam's melodic chants, allowing them to carry over the lower roofs of surrounding buildings and summon townspeople to the mosque. The streets we wound through were often old and consequently crooked and narrow—attenuating my sense of direction just enough to make the imam's verses, when we heard them, seem to come from nowhere but the sky. The sound of these hymns, removed from the city's spatial context by their aural nature, would be key to my comprehension of this foreign place and its foreign people.

I first had this swoony experience a couple days after arrival, well into our stay in Istanbul, and it broached to me a new mode of parsing the culture that I would be exploring for two weeks. At the outset, my wonder was of sight. On that same bus ride, we passed Roman walls and arches, their blocky curves still brilliant; an imperial palace of the old Sultanate; bridges impressive for both their scale and their grey-metal austerity; and those waters of the Bosporus which have borne sailing ships of pagan Greeks and crusading Christians. And I wasn't the only one focused on imagery: An anecdote you will no doubt find elsewhere in the pages of Mosaic offers that in any given Turkish shop there is displayed either the visage of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ["Father Turk"] or the Arabic script for Allah, the lords of Turkey's two great, and sometimes opposing, spheres of government and religion.

But the icons stick to the walls and stay there, or they are erected, like the
statue of General Atatürk in Ankara, to be landmarks of touristic wandering; they are curiosities of ideology, form-fixed. The singing that so ensnared my thoughts, at least so far as I could perceive it, was fluid. It was musical, temporal, and existed in no single moment. It cut through some fundamental skepticism of mine—alarmed and guarded against all the iconography—and seemed to free my linguistic sense. On the plane trip over, I had taken the stony Turkish of the native passengers in stride, and the English of the shopkeepers had so far been a stumbling annoyance. I ignored whatever they said—I ignored the sound of it. The imam’s song, language distilled from monumental culture rather than serving a commercial or convenient purpose, knocked me down, slowed my now-natural disinterest, and got my neck twisting to look for the beauty—the beauty of all the long Eastern history—in the wrought-iron window boxes of buildings built after their forebears were burned again and again by civilizations sweeping from either side of this hinge of continents. The mosques, visually and acoustically, were the pinprick I needed to gain some productive perspective.

That revelation, as I could arrogantly call it, left a sheen of authority on my brain. In the imam’s song, some truer cloth showed through the thick yarn of modern Turkey, or at least I would have said so, playing my proud bit role of Western critic. We had seen so much artifice, or at least we thought we had: Our tour guide, Denizhan Pekoz, licensed by the government, inspired parody by how often he seemed to glide past the rough facets of Turkish-American relations or whatever else presented itself as a tough issue. (To his credit, when we sincerely persisted in our questioning, Deniz gave reasoned and thoughtful responses). One young Turkish man, a busboy in one of the small cafés in the capital of Ankara, crystallized all of our doubts when he described to us his belief that the Turkish government maintained an entirely separate cultural experience for visiting foreigners involving exclusive sources of clean water and hotels of a standard higher than those open to the Turks themselves. It was elaborate, perhaps beyond reason, but hardly illogical. We had already been stringing out deadpan jokes in the same style.

And in that rebel spirit, my moment of entanglement with the imam’s voice felt empowering. When I later passed to the Asian flank of Istanbul and was able to walk among merchants without being crowded by each of their pitches, it might have pleased me to point and say in the settled voice of a scientist: “Aha! There it is; there is the reality of Istanbul. I have found the Turks who could not find themselves.” Virtue of contrast might have let one sort of experience, that of the bazaars with shop signs in English and assembly line Oriental spices, be the “fake” to another’s “real,” letting us be cozy in the value of our wisdom and the strength of our travelers’ judgment. But on separate days, I heard songs cast from the minarets both in those commercial districts and those populated by the “everyday folk;” and in each the sound was sweet and old to me. It was not truth, not more than anything else was—but neither was it artifice, any more than anything else. It was a piece of some whole beneath the readily perceptible skin. That whole, though exposed only fleetingly through chance gaps, must be—must be—where the identity of a people exists.
Atatürk and the Formation of Modern Turkey /


Turkish Tourism /


The Islamist Foundation of Turkish Political Secularism /

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
5 Narli: 42, Toprak.
6 Ibid.
8 Narli: 44.
11 Grigoriadis
12 Ibid.
13 Treaty of the EU contributors, Treaty of the EU: Accession Criteria (Copenhagen Criteria), art. 6(1) and 49 (1995), http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/accession_criteria_copenhague_en.htm
14 Narli: 44
15 Tavernise
16 Grigoriadis

Divisions in Turkish Society and Politics /


Selective Regulation in Turkey: A Society of Dichotomy /

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
This Land is Your Land? / 30

3. It varies from source to source. Many censuses brought the number in around 36,000 to 40,000 post-WWII, but today the population is said to be shrinking and there are many undocumented workers.

Six Arrows: Creating Cultural Identity / 36

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 39.
9. Ibid., 36.
12 Ibid., 215.
13 And, 216.
15 Ibid.

Strays / 39

1 Sahih Muslim 3815
2 The Holy Qur’an 6:38

Atatürk: A Question of Identity / 42


The History of Language and the Language of History / 48

2 Ibid., 95-112.
3 The Turkish Linguistic Society, founded in 1932 and responsible for the language reform, was patterned on the Turkish Historical Society.
5 Arkman, Ceran, The Launching of the Turkish Thesis of History: A Close Textual Analysis (Diss. Sabanci University, 2006).
6 Named dil devrimi, or the “language revolution,” it has long been referred to in Western discourse as the “language reform.” While reform suggests improvement, here it is mere convention that dictates its use and not the ameliorative implication.
7 Ozcan, 95-112.
There are issues of ethnicity and geography inherent in the term ‘Turk’; the adoption of the name Turkey for the politically defined nation-state largely ignored these issues.

Specifically Anatolian Turks in order to stunt pan-Turkic sentiment (Segars, 90)


Segars, 87-88.

Tachau, Frank,"Language and Politics: Turkish Language Reform,” *The Review of Politics* 26.2 (1964): 191-204. An addition made to the Ottoman-Turkish Pocket Dictionary of 1935:“The ‘Sun-Language Theory’ which sprang from the Turkish genius after the publication of the Dictionary, shows that not only the words included in it, but a great many more words are derived from Turkish… [such] that it is no longer necessary to throw out words which are necessary to our language and whose meanings are known among the people, and to replace these with new words that are not known.”


Segars, 90.

“Futurism” here is being used as it is defined by Arnold J. Toynbee in *A Study of History.*

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