Relational Self-Narratives: Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's Autobiographical Writings

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> Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Ergenekon*

Introduction

This study analyzes the autobiographical writings of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889-1974),[1] one of the leading figures of modern Turkish literature, employing a relational notion of self-representations in autobiography. Yakup Kadri actively participated in the cultural, social, and political events of the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Like many members of his generation, he was also an active figure in the foundation of the new Turkish Republic and an advocate of Mustafa Kemal's social, cultural, and political reforms. Accordingly, Yakup Kadri's memoirs tell the story of his past life in connection with his family, generation, nation, and history. As will be argued throughout this paper, Yakup Kadri's individuation process is actually constructed through his relation to "privileged" and

[1] For a more comprehensive study of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's life and literary works see Akı 2001, Aktaş 1987, and Yücel 1989. In addition, some aspects of Yakup Kadri's memoirs have been examined by İnci Enginün and Sema Uğurcan. While Enginün discusses the memoirs in the context of the literature of the Turkish War of Independence, Uğurcan examines them in connection with Yakup Kadri's prose fiction. See, for example, Enginün 1991: 109-119 and Uğurcan 1989: 205-218.

"significant" others, including his mother, father, friends, and intellectuals and political leaders of the time. In this regard, this study relies on the notion that the individuation process in autobiographical writings does not necessarily always occur in isolation, as argued by some critics, but rather in relation to, and in association with, others. This approach springs from the idea that, as a socially and historically produced cultural entity, the construction of the "self" in autobiographical writings is contextual and discursive, because "autobiographical narrators come to consciousness of who they are, of what identifications and differences they are assigned or what identities they might adopt, through the discourses that surround them."[2]

In approaching Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings, the study will rely primarily on the notion of autobiographical *relationality* put forward by such theorists and critics as Paul Eakin, Nancy K. Miller, Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson. Challenging the conventional idea of an individualistic, unified, and autonomous self portrayed in autobiography, which dominated auto-biographical studies until the early 1980s,[3] these theorists have argued that both identity and selfhood are relational despite differences in societies and cultures. Recent developments in literary studies and critical theory, such as postmodernism, feminism, post-colonialism and post-structuralism, have played a particularly significant role in current modes of autobiographical studies. The feminist, postmodern, and post-colonial critique of Enlightenment ideology and its values, including the individualistic subject, prepared the way for the emergence of a relational understanding of the autobiographical self. Gender-oriented discussions in literary criticism have been especially important to this development by warning against the danger of a universalizing maleness in literary studies. Writing in 1988, Susan S. Friedman criticized Gusdorf and others for failing to understand that "the self, self-creation, and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities, and many other non-Western peoples." This is because, she maintained, "individualistic paradigms of the self ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process of women and minorities." [4]

This relational understanding of selfhood, initially conceived as the major characteristic of autobiographical writing of women and minorities, has gradually led the way for the idea of relational self-representation beyond ethnic and gender lines. Accordingly, all selfhood in autobiographical narratives began to be considered relational "despite differences that fall out along gender lines," imply-

2 Smith and Watson 2001: 34.

3 Until the early 1980s, Georges Gusdorf and Philippe Lejeune's concept of autobiography dominated critiques of autobiographical writings. Both critics and their followers related the rise of modern autobiography to Enlightenment individualism, stressing the idea of autonomous and unique selfhood portrayed in autobiography. See, Gusdorf 1980: 28-48 and Lejeune 1989.

4 See Friedman 1998: 72-82 and Miller 1980: 258-73.

ing that both female and male autobiographical practices constitute similar patterns.[5] Nancy K. Miller explains this by asserting that self-portrayal in male-authored autobiographical writings is constructed through the relation to privileged others that also characterizes female-authored autobiography.[6] These privileged others include family members (mostly mothers and fathers), friends, colleagues, and the identifiable figures of a collective past such as political leaders. It is through these others that the autobiographical subject's social and collective formation or understanding takes place, because "autobiographical subjects know themselves as subjects of particular kinds of experience attached to their social status and identities." They also "make themselves known by acts of identification, and by implication, differentiation in the world they live."[7]

Using the notion of relational selfhood briefly discussed above, this paper will argue that in his autobiographical writings, Yakup Kadri conceives identity as relational and the autobiographical narratives he produces are also relational, because the story of his family, generation, and other privileged ones, provides the key to his own individual identity and character. It will convey that Yakup Kadri's self-identity is developed through linking the story of himself with that of his family, generation, and nation, and that he reveals the processes of his identity formation by placing himself not only as a witness to the story of his family and the events of modern Turkish history, but also as one of the main actors of the Turkish nationalist resistance against foreign occupation. The paper will also show that in telling the story of others, Yakup Kadri reflects his own personality and character, especially by comparing and contrasting character and ideological differences between himself and others.

Generally speaking, in terms of their main focus and differences in constructing the self, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical memoirs can be divided into three periods: his childhood, the Second Constitutional Period, and World War I (1908-1919), where he records the social, political, and cultural events of Ottoman Turkish society, and finally, his memoirs that deal with the Turkish National Struggle and the foundation of the new republic (1919-1923). His life narratives depict the gradual intellectual and ideological formation and maturation of his sense of self through his education, reading, and encounters with the social and political situations of the time, which is a reflection of the Western autobiography tradition. However, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings fundamentally differ from conventional Western autobiography in constructing self-identity by insisting on a relational, rather than an isolationist, notion of the individuation process as argued throughout this study.

5 Eakin 1999: 50.
6 Miller 1994: 3.
7 Ibid.: 27 and 32.

First Period

*Anamın Kitabı (*My Mother's Book*)*, a memoir going into the depths of Yakup Kadri's early selfhood, focuses mainly on his early childhood and youth. In the preface, the author asserts that he wrote this memoir to challenge the idea that childhood is the happiest time in one's life. This memoir tells the story of Yakup Kadri's birth, genealogy, geographic origins, schooling, parents, the literary works he read or studied as a young boy, and the social environment in Egypt, Manisa, and Izmir. It recounts his life by presenting it not in a chronological order, but rather through a general overview describing various fragmented aspects of his childhood. The memoir describes the unhappy, alienated, reserved, shy, and well-behaved young Yakup Kadri, his relationship with his father and mother, his upper-class family, their luxurious lifestyle in Egypt, and the tragic economic and social collapse that would follow. It thus offers a detailed account of his early character formation and personality through significant others and his social environment.

Yakup Kadri's father and mother are portrayed as the key significant others in *Anamın Kitabı*, in which the author attempts to create a binary opposition between the two. While his father is represented as an ordinary and simple provincial man with various physical and mental health problems in spite of his prominent family background, his mother is portrayed as a proud, elegant, royal, and angelic lady, whom Yakup Kadri simply adores. In doing so, Yakup Kadri closely associates himself with his mother and her family while distancing himself from his father and his family, which, according to the author, had fallen on hard times as a result of its recent economic and social decline.

Even though the memoir is entitled *Anamın Kitabı*, it begins with a description of the relationship between Yakup Kadri and his father. In fact, the first section of the book, entitled "Relations with my father were not pleasant" *(Babamla aram hoş değildi)*,[8] is essentially devoted to describing why the author did not get along with his father, Abdülkadir Bey, by depicting the physical and psychological state of his father until his death. First of all, Yakup Kadri's father both in terms of his physical appearance and character did not meet the requirements of an ideal father figure in the mind of the author. Recalling his childhood impressions of his father, Yakup Kadri writes that there was nothing about his father that was pleasant or likeable, and he disliked everything about his father, including his name, appearance, disposition, and speaking manner. According to Yakup Kadri, his father "was a plump and round-bearded man with a round and bald

[8] Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 17. This book was first published in 1957. Also, note that while Yakup Kadri gives a detailed description of his father's physical appearance and personality, he does not say a lot about his mother. In fact, his mother usually appears in connection with his father, the family, or the author himself and the reader is not told either her name or what she looks like.

head." Because of his discontent with his father, these three physical attributes were the exact opposites of what Yakup Kadri hoped to be; he desired to become a tall, "well-proportioned young man with a thin curling moustache."[9]

Furthermore, Yakup Kadri was especially displeased with his father's heavy local dialect. Even though he belonged to a wealthy and prominent family, because of his provincial upbringing, Abdülkadir Bey, according to the narrator, did not pronounce some Turkish words properly. For example, he used dialect words like, *ürüzgar* (wind), *hincik* (now), and *gadın* or *garı* (woman), instead of the standard *rüzgar*, *şimdi* and *kadın* respectively. The child Yakup Kadri was embarrassed by this because he considered the use of these dialect words as insulting his mother, who was raised in the palace of governor İsmail Pasha in Egypt.[10] Yakup Kadri makes it clear that his father lacked the characteristics of a gentleman that fit the profile of his family, especially Yakup Kadri's mother's upper-class background and elegancy.[11]

Yakup Kadri was also puzzled by the unconditional devotion, submission, and dedication of his mother to someone as unworthy as his father. This is not only because his father was a common and simple man, but he was also always inappreciative of and disrespectful to his wife. Yakup Kadri's mother's rather extreme pride and devotion to her husband and family led her not only to try and hide her husband's mental ailments from others, but also to sell off her family heirlooms and jewelry to cover the household expenses her husband could no longer provide. It is this unconditional sacrifice and devotion that clearly invoked deep admiration and affection in Yakup Kadri for his mother. According to Yakup Kadri, his father often treated his mother like an old veteran nanny of the household.[12] Yakup Kadri even caught Abdülkadir Bey cheating on his wife with another woman, which appears to have left Yakup Kadri with a permanent and unforgettable sense of betrayal towards his father. A vivid and detailed description of this incident in the memoir is a clear indication of the lasting impact it had on the author.[13]

However, despite his overall negative representation of his father, Yakup Kadri also makes an attempt to show both a connection to and compassion for his father once he had been alienated from his family and friends due to his failing health. As time went on, Abdülkadir Bey essentially lost touch with the outside world and began to live in a world of "imagination" and "illusion." He devoted himself entirely to religion and praying, and even began to tell Yakup Kadri and

9 Ibid., 18.
10 Ibid.
11 Ironically, speaking of his Anatolian upbringing and its persistent influence on his later life, Yakup Kadri states that there was very little difference between his accent and the accent of his father. See Akı 2001: 16.
12 Ibid., 18-19.
13 Ibid., 22-24.

his sister some "miraculous" religious tales. While finding these stories "childish" and "ridiculous," Yakup Kadri still did not want to believe that his father had become such an ignorant and simple minded man in light of the fact that his library was filled with literary books both in Turkish and French.[14]

Yakup Kadri is especially critical of those who severed their relationships with his father when his physical and psychological illness worsened, just before his death. The connection to his father is also evident in the aftermath of his father's death when Yakup Kadri underwent a process of fundamental emotional and character transformation. Although he attempts to deny a connection between his father's death and his changing character, Yakup Kadri regards the time around his father's death as a significant turning point in his life, stating that during this period he in a way possessed a double personality: The shy, easygoing, and introverted boy versus the naughty, sneaky hooligan. Yakup Kadri articulates that these two personalities were constantly in competition with each other. As a result of this character transformation, Yakup Kadri, who was bullied by children in the town, began to bully and beat other kids. Only after his mother stopped speaking to him for a long time and he realized that this was actually upsetting her did Yakup Kadri change his behavior to try to make up with her.[15]

Despite Yakup Kadri's denial of a direct connection between the changing of his character and his father's death, his showing sympathy towards his father's alienation and his undergoing such a mental transformation following his father's death, can be read as an attempt to make peace with his past so that he can associate himself with it. Furthermore, these accounts about Yakup Kadri's father can be regarded as a confession of embarrassment for being a son of such a father, and also his guilt for feeling such embarrassment. This is why he later attempts to free his father from being a completely negative figure in his life. As a result, even though Yakup Kadri's childhood stories regarding his father focus essentially on negative recollections, they can still be considered positive, because he tries to link his present self-identity to this memory of his childhood and family's past.

As he does with his mother and father, Yakup Kadri attempts to create a binary opposition between his family and the general public in Manisa by describing the unclean, poor, and disordered aspects of the town in opposition to the clean, rich, colorful, luxurious, and aristocratic lifestyle of his family's past in Egypt. This is evident in the narrator's reflection on his own feelings vis-à-vis other children in the town, his general impression of Manisa, and his mother's stories regarding her first arrival there. Recalling his teachers, school, and classmates in Manisa, Yakup Kadri asserts that the dirty and unclean school environment, including the disgusting and unhygienic cafeteria, made him suffer more than the displeased face of his teacher or the principle's stick.[16] In such an un-

14 Ibid., 61-64 and 74-77.
15 Ibid., 87-89.
16 Ibid., 29-30.

friendly and frightening environment, some students used to bully him and take his lunch bag away. According to Yakup Kadri, this bullying occurred not because he was afraid of those students, but because he was too shy, proud, and polite to deal with them:

> I was not only a well-behaved and timid child; I was at the same time an extremely shy child. First of all, swearing and fighting seemed shameful to me and my pride would not allow me to be together with those who acted in such shameful ways.[17]

Instead of fighting back, the young Yakup Kadri backed away from them and silently cried. In such an unclean, inhospitable, and unfamiliar environment, the reader finds the alienated, shy, and introverted Yakup Kadri feeling constant nostalgia for his happy days and old palace lifestyle in Egypt, and contrasting his happy days in Egypt with his difficult days in Manisa. For instance, he remembers how he and his sister used to cry silently about their current difficult conditions in Manisa, recalling their extravagant house with its garden, where they were spoiled and treated so well. He recalls how they were served and dressed, taken to their mother by their friendly nannies, and then had their well-prepared breakfast. He also talks about happy days spent at amusement parks with his father, who bought them expensive toys.[18]

Describing life in the palace in Egypt as being like a fairytale, Yakup Kadri's mother used to tell her two children about the royal parties, balls, and operas she attended and the fancy clothes she used to wear to these social occasions. These stories had a profound impact on Yakup Kadri for he also remembered various parts of the palace. In addition, there were a number of framed pictures of royal relatives around the house who still sent them letters from Egypt.[19] Thus the faces, clothes, voices, and movements of noble people continued to echo in the minds of Yakup Kadri and the family, deepening their nostalgia and admiration for their glorious and colorful lost lifestyle and persistently reminding the young boy of the sharp contrast between the two social environments of his childhood past and present.

Yakup Kadri's reflection of their aristocratic life in Egypt, in comparison to Manisa, illustrates the family's struggle to grow accustomed to living under difficult conditions and establish a connection with the general public. It also shows that class differences greatly contributed to Yakup Kadri's failure to establish a relationship with other children in Manisa. Like within his family, outside the family others played a double role in constructing his self-identity. While his family is conceived as something to closely identify with, others outside his family are perceived as something to disassociate himself from. It is in this way that Yakup Kadri attempts to define his self-formation during his childhood.

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17 Ibid., 31.
18 Ibid., 20.
19 Ibid., 115-117.

Second Period

Covering the years of 1908 and 1916 in his autobiographical narratives, Yakup Kadri depicts the second period of his life as an individualistic, cosmopolitan, degenerative, and bohemian time. He closely connects his identity to that of others by relating his own life narrative to that of his generation and society and criticizing both his and his contemporaries' attitudes.[20] Here, Yakup Kadri constructs himself as someone who was a pessimist and indifferent to the political, social, and cultural issues facing his society, worrying rather about individual literary accomplishments and intellectual development:

> At the age of eighteen I was a rebellious anarchist. My greatest objective was to bring down any influential man or anyone occupying a high position. I also wanted to lead an uprising and incite the public to action like wind shivering a forest. At thirty, I had given up all this, did not believe in anything, and had abandoned myself into bodily pleasures. However, I awakened from this inflammation of flesh with a different kind of inflammation, that of the soul. A mystical longing wrapped around my heart like a flame of fire. With the growth of this flame I was coming to life and filling my tepid solitude with ghosts whose faces remind one of clear spring waters.[21]

In his autobiographical narratives, Yakup Kadri considers this tendency to be a general characteristic of his generation and social environment. Pointing out that during that period the youth did not "believe in anything or anybody anymore," he emphasizes the fact that his generation was enmeshed in the political and social polarization, confusion, disbelief, and disappointment that dominated the whole of Turkish society. More particularly, the political leaders and statesmen were in competition with each other to gain power for their own benefit or personal reputation, rather than to bring about social and political change in society. Yakup Kadri explains that the end of the nineteenth century was a period of grand disbelief, scepticism, and disassociation in Europe, which ultimately led the young generation to alienate themselves from the social and political crises of the time:

> As in our individual lives, we had become completely suspicious about issues facing our people and country. And we were trying to insert this collapse of soul and faith into some kind of scientific and ideological system with the help of a few foreign books.[22]

Yakup Kadri points his criticism specifically towards two literary trends of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, namely *Servet-i Fünun* (Wealth of Sciences) and *Fecr-i Ati* (Future Down). The poets and writers of the

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20 It is important to note that Yakup Kadri continued to adopt a similar critical attitude towards some of his contemporaries, like Ali Kemal and Cenap Şahabettin, who wrote daily columns in opposition to the Turkish nationalist resistance movement in Anatolia after the World War I.

21 Karaosmanoğlu 1964: 227.

22 Karaosmanoğlu 1961: 12.

these literary currents produced creative works in accordance with the ideas "art for art's sake" and "art is personal and respectable," regarding literature and arts as inherently admirable, beautiful, and valuable manifestations of human creativity and intelligence from which individuals acquire intellectual and emotional pleasure and thus essentially remain indifferent to the political and social crises of the time. At that time, Yakup Kadri was also a member of the *Fecr-i Ati* literary group and a devoted admirer and follower of the leading figures of these literary movements. Writing in 1933, Yakup Kadri recalls the invitation of a friend, Şahabettin Süleyman, to join the *Fecr-i Ati* literary society with a group of some of the most famous writers of the time. Excited and shocked by the invitation, Yakup Kadri accepted. They gathered in a small room, where the name (*Fecr-i Ati*) and the slogan ("Art is personal and respectable") of the society were decided upon after long debates. The impact of these discussions on the young Yakup Kadri was remarkable:

> "Art is personal and respectable! I returned home repeating this sentence a hundred times, memorizing it within me like a prayer. "Art is personal and respectable!" And fate required that I should have to defend this great, this sacred ideology against a number of unaware people right from the first step of the Fecr-i Ati.[23]

Yakup Kadri concludes that this "enthusiasm" and "foolhardiness" for this concept of art and literature continued until the Balkan War, which marked the beginning of his transition to a new ideology, Turkish patriotism and nationalism. According to the author, in the following years, although he continued to regard art and literature as admirable and personal, he also began to think that there could be some things that were more important and things that were not so "personal" and "respectable."[24]

During the second period, of which he would become critical in later years, he closely associated himself with his generation, the general tendency of which was to be alienated, individualistic, and pessimistic. Only rarely does he reflect on his personality separately when he attempts to describe the differences in outlook and character between himself and his friends. For example, on one occasion he contrasts his psychological and mental disposition with that of his good friend Refik Halit Karay by asserting that while he himself was a man of letters and generally pessimistic and spiritual in nature, his friend was more optimistic, realistic, and worldly. Yakup Kadri's objective here is to demonstrate that despite these differences, both acted together in cultural and literary circles.[25]

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23 Yakup Kadri 1933: 25.

24 Ibid.: 26.

25 Karaosmanoğlu 1969: 68-69. It was also during this period of ideological and personal crisis that Yakup Kadri briefly became interested in classical Greco-Latin literature and Sufism and its mystical teachings before becoming a nationalist writer.

Third Period

As mentioned earlier, the Balkan War marked the beginning of Yakup Kadri's break with individualism and his interest in social issues facing Ottoman Turkish society. Accordingly, starting at around the end of World War I, he began to associate himself with the Turkish nationalist resistance movement in Anatolia under Mustafa Kemal's leadership. Initially, in Istanbul, he wrote daily columns in the influential newspaper *İkdam* supporting the nascent movement. Later, he accompanied Halide Edip Adıvar to Anatolia as a journalist to report from the various fronts, describing tragic aspects of the war, and its impact on the Anatolian people. His memoirs show his ideological transformation from individualism and cosmopolitanism to Turkish nationalism around this time. Reflecting on this transition, Yakup Kadri writes:

> Finally the years 1914-1918 came. The wolf flocks of Western imperialism that had become crazy with blood and looting violently attacked our poor sheep-pens. And no traces of literary societies and sacred ideas of art were left out. At that moment, I realized with bitter clarity that art, for whose sake I had poured forth much sweat, is first the property of a society and a nation. In addition, it is, after all, the expression of a period. Isolated from these qualities, art has neither meaning nor value. Sovereign art could exist only in a sovereign nation.[26]

Yakup Kadri further states that the recent political events, meaning World War I and the Turkish War of Independence, clearly denied the idea of art as "personal" and "respectable," which he had earlier supported.

In his autobiographical writings, Yakup Kadri constructs the third period in direct opposition to the previous one by closely linking his representation of self with the history of his nation. Because of his new-found commitment to the Turkish nationalist struggle, he begins to construe his earlier life as a chronological narrative of ideological errors and self-indulgence.

Broadly speaking, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings describing this period have two significant functions: First, through telling the history of the emergence of the modern Turkish nation, he constructs himself as one of the main figures and agents of the Turkish nationalist movement, and his contributions to the daily newspapers in Istanbul supporting the Anatolian movement was a manifestation of this. He represents himself as an intellectual innovator, a defender of his nation, and a writer of modern Turkish history. Second, by situating himself as a narrator of such great political events of the Turkish past, he becomes an autobiographical subject who makes these historical events memorable and vivid in the present time. By doing this, he actually underscores his own self-identity, because his writings are concerned with the expression of his own

[26] Yakup Kadri 1933: 26.

particular experience during the time of a collective struggle, although his personality and personal life are fundamentally missing in these narratives.

As stated above, these autobiographical narratives of the third period basically portray the emergence and development of the Turkish nationalist resistance in Anatolia after World War I and the events surroundings the Turkish War of Independence between 1919 and 1923. The general characteristics of the autobiographical writings of Yakup Kadri during this period show great differences from the second period: Pessimism is replaced by optimism despite social and political hardship, and there is a rejection of individualism and cosmopolitanism, an ultimate belief in the leader and the people, a growing anti-imperialist sentiment, and an attempt by Yakup Kadri to connect with the people to overcome his feelings of alienation. In this regard, Yakup Kadri's memoir *Vatan Yolunda: Milli Mücadele Hatıraları* (On the Road to Homeland: Memoirs of the National Struggle), originally published in 1958, occupies a vital place. Throughout the book, the reader encounters the idealization of the Turkish War of Independence and its leadership, symbolized in the personality of Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the movement and the founder of modern Turkey.

In the preface to *Vatan Yolunda*, in discussing the reasons behind the publication of his book, Yakup Kadri remarks that people who have written their memoirs on the events of the Turkish nationalist struggle have often had various political or personal agendas. While some have aimed to tell their personal heroic stories to show their profound contribution to this event and to promote their credibility in society by intimately connecting themselves with Mustafa Kemal, others have sought to claim that they were one of the very first instigators of this resistance movement. On this point, he further adds that some authors have even gone so far as to claim that the Turkish national movement should be attributed to the rise of regional militia resistance movements, and not to Mustafa Kemal's landing at Samsun in May 1919.[27]

In Yakup Kadri's view, approaching the nationalist struggle as an individualist effort makes it difficult to discuss it as a collective national movement, because it loses its prominence and meaning in the eyes of the public and turns into a collection of autobiographical or monographic works.[28] He thus implies that such individualist concerns have undermined the spirit, excitement, and enthusiasm behind the Turkish nationalist struggle. By looking at the nationalist struggle as a collective experience, Yakup Kadri depicts the heroism of the Turkish people and

[27] Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 13. Also note that although Yakup Kadri acknowledges the presence of regional resistance movements before Mustafa Kemal's arrival to Anatolia, he adopts a very critical approach to these movements, as most of them gradually began to be destructive rather than beneficial to the organized resistance movement due to their lack of discipline and organization and potentially rebellious brigand leaders. For this reason, Mustafa Kemal disbanded these movements shortly after the establishment of an organized army.

[28] Ibid.: 14.

their leader, Mustafa Kemal, in the Turkish War of Independence. Therefore, despite his claims of objectivity in accounting the events surrounding this period, idealism and emotion dominate the pages of this memoir. In fact, the memoir gradually turns into an historical epic with Mustafa Kemal as its hero, who accomplished the impossible by successfully leading his people to sovereignty and by creating a new modern nation from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Through his accounts of the events of this period, Yakup Kadri attempts to reawaken the spirit and idealism of the Turkish people's struggle to independence and revive their lost memory.

When the Turkish national movement started under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, Yakup Kadri was in Switzerland getting treatment for his health problems. He thus begins *Vatan Yolunda* by providing a general overview of the perception of some Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals towards the resistance movement in Anatolia. Here Yakup Kadri creates a binary opposition between the supporters and dissenters of the movement. He even goes so far as to consider the dissenters enemies and traitors of the nationalist cause. Regarding any opposition to the Anatolian movement as an attempt to undermine the national resistance, he sharply criticizes those who were still loyal to the Sultan and who sought the protection of Britain or America to preserve the Ottoman Empire.

To explain his views of this group of people, Yakup Kadri quotes a daily column he wrote in 1920 that promoted the national cause among the general public. In this column, he attempted to draw the attention of the reader to the mentality of pessimism and despair among intellectuals during the time of war. He considered pessimism *(bedbinlik)* and despair dangerous for the well-being of the general public, stressing that especially during times of crises pessimism was a sign of "defeatism" *(hezimetçilik)* and "unreliability" *(mızıkçılık)* or was a sort of "unconscious treachery" *(şuursuz hainlik)*. This was because, in Yakup Kadri's view, the damage caused by people with these attitudes in a society was much more than any external enemy. For Yakup Kadri, these people are "brainless friends" *(akılsız dostlar)* who unintentionally give away the fortress from inside and make you miss your "wise enemies" *(akıllı düşmanlar)*.[29] According to the author, in addition to their pessimism and despair about the current condition of society, these intellectuals and statesmen failed to understand the "vicious" motives and "hypocrisy" of the Triple Entente nations, who were on the whole the enemy of the Turks and whose main objective was to wipe out the Turkish people from world history.[30] These Ottoman leaders still believed in negotiating with Westerners in order to preserve the Empire under a Western mandate.[31] By

29 Ibid.: 53-54.

30 Ibid.: 23-28.

31 As mentioned earlier, a similar view is also evident in Yakup Kadri's relationship with his literary contemporaries who were said to write against the national struggle in Anatolia.

negatively judging these so-called cosmopolitan and liberal statesmen and intellectuals, Yakup Kadri defines his relationship with them in accordance with their attitude toward the Anatolian movement,[32] creating the Other of himself and the advocators of the national resistance and constructing an identity for himself as separate from these dissenters.

In addition, Yakup Kadri briefly depicts European attitudes towards the Turkish people and the nationalist resistance movement in *Vatan Yolunda*. European media, for example, not only underestimated the injustices and oppression the Turks faced by those European nations victorious in World War I, but also made life more difficult for Turks in exile by provoking the European public against them.[33] This greatly contributed to Yakup Kadri's questioning in his memoir of major European ideas, like humanity, justice, and civilization.[34] Portraying Europeans as civilized and technologically advanced, but at the same time "vicious" and "hypocritical," Yakup Kadri sharply criticizes the broader aggressive policies of these countries, which he felt aimed to destroy the Turkish nation's existence in history. The occupation of Istanbul and Izmir by French and British forces encouraged Yakup Kadri's anti-imperialist and nationalist sentiments and ideas. For example, he describes the mistreatment of the Turkish people by their foreign occupiers upon his return to Istanbul from Switzerland as comparable to that of the Untouchables of India under British colonial rule. Although here Yakup Kadri fundamentally talks about external events, we see radical changes in the way he perceives his self-identity. He associates his individual life with the pains and subjugation of his people under foreign domination.

Yakup Kadri's construction of Europeans and local opponents of the national resistance movement as the Other has significant implications regarding the relationship between national identity and his autobiographical writing. More specifically, his portrayal of Europeans as "imperialists" and native opponents as "collaborators" can be read as an important discursive means for the author to construct Turkish national identity vis-à-vis European nations and Ottoman identity. This is because he regards his autobiographical narrative as a vehicle through which Turkish people and their leadership laid claim to an identity different from that of the Ottomans and Europeans. By generating a sense of solidarity and communal self-awareness among the peoples of Turkey based on a distinct historical experience, Europeans and opponents of the Turkish nationalist movement are constructed in this memoir as the Other of this movement and its leader, whose ultimate determination and resilience resulted in the birth of the modern Turkish nation. This is relevant to major contemporary theories of

These views are expressed in the related pages of Yakup Kadri's *Gençlik ve Edebiyat Hatıraları*. See Karaosmanoğlu 1969.

32 Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 19-34.

33 Ibid.: 23.

34 Ibid.: 27.

nationalism, according to which different communities of people create narratives about their existence on distinct collectivities, cultures, and histories.[35] In a similar way, Yakup Kadri produces national narratives that are founded upon the discourse of others, employing his autobiographical writing as a discursive strategy for advocating Turkish national identity by locating his nation in direct opposition to Europeans and the Ottomans.

In opposition to his negative portrayal of some Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen and Europeans, Yakup Kadri idealizes the military and political leadership of Mustafa Kemal in *Vatan Yolunda* by closely linking his own personal identity with that of Mustafa Kemal. From the beginning of the national struggle to the end, through descriptions of his military heroism in various fronts during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence and his political genius, Mustafa Kemal is regarded as a person who possessed all the qualifications, charisma, intellectuality, and character to be a legitimate leader of the Turkish people and nation. Describing their first encounter in Ankara, Yakup Kadri compares Mustafa Kemal's face to an old medallion. He further explains that even though his face had the impression of someone who worked, thought hard, and saw hard times, there was no sign of exhaustion. According to the author, Mustafa Kemal understood what the people wanted and needed.[36] The encounter with him in Ankara deepened Yakup Kadri's respect and admiration for Mustafa Kemal, to whom he was bound emotionally and ideologically during his lifetime.

By presenting Mustafa Kemal as the undisputed leader who successfully led his people to victory and complete independence under very hard social and political conditions, Yakup Kadri situates his narrative in direct contrast to the oppositional autobiographical narratives produced by the political opponents of Mustafa Kemal in response to *Nutuk* (Speech), a report delivered by him before the congress of the Republican People's Party in 1927. In *Nutuk*, which has become the essential source for almost all Turkish historiography on this period and describes the events of the Turkish War of Independence between 1919 and 1922 under his military and political leadership, Mustafa Kemal undermines the roles of other leaders in the war and foundation of modern Turkey and defends his reforms and policies in the early years of the Republic. After the delivery of *Nutuk*, former war-time comrades who had become political opponents of Mustafa Kemal wrote life narratives about the military and political events of the same period to defend themselves against Mustafa Kemal's arguments in his speech.[37]

Writing essentially within Turkish official ideology and historiography, Yakup Kadri constructs his self-identity in direct conjunction with the author of *Nutuk,*

35 See, for example, Anderson 1991 and Smith 1991.

36 Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 120.

37 Adak, Hülya 2003: 509-10. See also the whole of this work and her article, "Who is afraid of Dr. Rıza Nur's Autobiography?" in this collection for a more detailed examination of *Nutuk* in comparison to these oppositional life narratives.

as both texts illustrate profound thematic and structural similarities in describing the events of this period. Although Yakup Kadri's memoir ends with the liberation of Izmir from the Greeks in September 1922 and *Nutuk* goes beyond this date to briefly describe the internal political dispute among the leaders of the early Republic up to 1927, both texts adopt almost the same approach to the military and political events of the Turkish national movement from 1919 to 1922.[38] In fact, in many ways *Vatan Yolunda* directly coincides with *Nutuk* in depicting the emergence of the nationalist resistance movement and its development through the regional congresses in Anatolia, and in representing Mustafa Kemal as the sole military and political leader of this movement from its beginning to its end. This is especially evident in Yakup Kadri's frequent citations from *Nutuk* to back up his narrative and validate his claims about this period. By using the authority of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and *Nutuk* in this way, he attempts to convince the reader that it is his version of the story that should be accepted as the accurate account of the Turkish national struggle. Therefore, while endorsing Mustafa Kemal's leadership in this movement and defending his claims expressed in *Nutuk*, Yakup Kadri also attempts to secure a position in modern Turkish history as an important ally of Mustafa Kemal and an agent of the Turkish nationalist struggle by constructing himself as a subject who is centered in the public as both an evaluator and actor of this common history. He thus negotiates his position in his relationship to the other significant figures of the time, including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, by inserting his own history into the history of modern Turkey. He appears to be well aware that through his autobiographical writings, the political, social, and cultural contexts of modern Turkey become vivid and memorable. In short, in this context, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical narrative, *Vatan Yolunda*, indicates multiple rhetorical functions: As a life narrator, although his life narratives offer subjective truth about a particular time, Yakup Kadri is also making "history" in a sense by enshrining a community and contributing to writing modern Turkish historiography. He also justifies his own perception, upholds his reputation, disputes the accounts of others, conveys cultural information, and invents a desirable future for his nation.[39]

Conclusion

As shown throughout this study, Yakup Kadri constantly positions his individual identity in relation to others by association with them or disassociation from them, whether they are family members, colleagues, or leaders. As argued by Smith and Watson:

[38] In another memoir, *Politikada 45 Yıl* (45 Years in Politics), Yakup Kadri deals with the political events of the early republic. Here, too, he closely allies himself with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reforms and policies. See Karaosmanoğlu 1968: 29-143.

[39] Smith and Watson 2001: 10.

> Autobiographies often incorporate several models of identity in succession or in alternation to tell a story of serial development. Sometimes these models of identities are conflictual. Sometimes narrators explicitly resist certain identities. Sometimes they obsessively work to confirm their self-representation to particular identity frames.[40]

In his autobiographical writings, Yakup Kadri's self-identity shifts with social and political conditions in different times and environments. As a young boy, he resists associating his self-formation with his father within the family and the town people outside the family, while closely identifying himself with his mother and her royal family. Also, he occasionally constructs his self-identity in opposition to his earlier characteristics as in the case of the pessimism and individualism of the second period in contrast to the optimism and nationalism of the third. This reflects not only the multiple and dynamic nature of Yakup Kadri's personality but also the relational aspect of his self-formation. This is because, as a product of a particular time and place, his "self" is formed in different identity-shaping social, political, and cultural environments.

In approaching Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings from a relational perspective, one can see that speaking through others, he actually not only tells the story of an individual as a part of a family, generation, and nation, but also constructs a "self" that is separate from them. Whatever motives Yakup Kadri had to produce his autobiographical writings, it is the narration of a particular person's experience that is the center of these narratives. Therefore, it is difficult to say that Yakup Kadri insists that his narratives are only the history of his people rather than the story of his individual life. In addition, the literary creation and representation of his particular experiences permit him to assert some degree of autonomy from his people, family, and generation by constructing himself in association with and in opposition to others. For example, in his memoirs of his childhood and youth, when he describes the history of his family and his relationship with his parents, and when he represents the character of his friends and his relationships with them, he is at the same time also separating himself from them by narrating through others. Thus, his autobiography can be regarded not simply as a story of an individual who is part of a family, generation, or nation, but also as a construction of self through relational autobiographical writing.

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