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**Picturing Modern Ankara: “New Turkey” in Western
imagination**

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Title:

Picturing Modern Ankara: New Turkey in Western Imagination

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Abstract:

With the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, in October 1923, Ankara became the laboratory and showcase of the nation-building project led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. A number of European architects, planners, and artists were involved in the transformation of this small Anatolian town into the political and symbolic centre of the 'New Turkey' - as the Republic was also known. At the same time, European observers were drawn to witness a place that was described as 'the most extraordinary capital in the world'. At a crucial juncture, in which the geopolitical space of the Orient was radically reconfigured, Ankara provided an unexpected terrain of cross-cultural encounters between East and West. The essay explores the historical traces of these encounters that emerge from an uncharted body of sources, ranging from early-1920s travel writings to the first comprehensive accounts of the new capital published in the mid-1930s. A tropological analysis of this rich and diverse literature shows that Ankara destabilised the discursive frame through which the West had hitherto constructed the Orient as its irreducible other. The accounts of this modernist experiment reasserted the hegemony of western culture while revealing, in the process, its inner fractures and contradictions.

Introduction

In modern urban societies the production of the built environment is inextricably bound up with discursive practices. Along with visual images, texts are implicated in the cultural production through which cities are perceived, represented, and imagined.¹ This is true not only of those texts that fall under the specific genre of urban literature, but also of a wider discourse that, in different guises, contributes to establish social meanings and identities. In the case of capital cities, this process impinges upon the formation of national identities insofar as urban images reflect, and often reinforce, the shared narrative of 'imagined communities'. Furthermore, if discursive practices are involved in shaping the self-representation of cities and entire nations, they are no less important in defining how the latter are perceived from the outside. The cross-cultural perceptions between insiders and outsiders is particularly interesting in the context of modern Turkey, as its capital, Ankara, became an unexpected terrain of interactions between East and West during the early Republican period.

The making of modern Ankara is a critical yet often neglected episode in the history of twentieth-century urbanism. The transformation of this forsaken Anatolian town into the capital of the Turkish Republic, proclaimed in 1923, was driven by the modernising and westernising ethos of the nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.² This episode has been the subject of sustained investigation in recent years, as part of a wider effort to open up the canon of architectural historiography to 'Other Modernisms'.³ Against this background, this essay addresses a question that has so far remained marginal to architectural enquiry: how was the making of modern Ankara viewed *from the West*? Focusing on the textual representations produced by European observers in the 1920s and 1930s, the present case study investigates how this modernist experiment contributed to shape the western imagination of 'New Turkey', as the young Republic was also called.

The critical framework for this study is provided by the notion of Orientalism, which Edward Said described as the dominant system of knowledge about the Orient developed *in and for* the West through practices of incorporation, assimilation, and cultural othering. Taking this seminal argument as a starting point, the essay unpacks the discursive strategies deployed by western observers who wrote about Ankara in the early Republican period. The *tropological* study that is put forward here is based on the comparative analysis of recurring themes and tropes that run through this wide-ranging discourse. The impressions recorded by a variety of writers, journalists, and diplomats are then related to the image of the city that was constructed in Turkey at the same time, also with the aid of European authors

and artists. While the main emphasis is on published texts, the essay takes into account also selected images that were integral to those writings and points out how visual and textual tropes were often entwined.

Ankara as a contact zone

The emergence of Ankara to the international scene, in the early 1920s, should in fact be considered a reemergence. A former provincial capital in the Roman Empire, this ancient settlement had been a thriving centre of the international mohair trade under Ottoman rule, and had been represented by European travellers since the early-modern era.⁴ During the nineteenth century, when the Ottomans lost the monopoly in this lucrative commerce, Ankara underwent a period of steady decline that appeared to be irreversible. By the outbreak of the First World War, the town held a marginal place in the urban hierarchy of the Empire and had all but disappeared from western accounts of the region. The ravages caused by a major fire in 1916 piled further misery on an already destitute place. A positive reversal of fortune began in 1920, when the insurgent nationalist movement set up in Ankara its headquarters. With its fortified Citadel topping a hill of the Central Anatolian plateau, Ankara became the main stronghold during the Turkish War of Independence. By the end of the conflict, it had already functioned as de facto capital of the breakaway nationalist state, and, although other locations were considered for the seat of the Republic, its official status was finally sealed in October 1923.

The choice of the new capital was dictated by a combination of factors.⁵ Situated in a strategic position within the Anatolian peninsula, at the intersection of important traffic routes, Ankara was suitably remote from the cosmopolitan metropolis on the Bosphorus. Owing to its history and location, it offered an ideal opportunity to cleanse the image of corruption and decay associated with the old imperial centre and fashion a modern nation state with a strong Anatolian identity. Since the Republic was proclaimed, with Kemal as President, the new capital became the symbol of a country firmly projected towards the West. The move from Constantinople to Ankara took the world by surprise, and this was due to symbolic as well as geopolitical reasons. From a European perspective, the demise of old capital meant the loss of the pivotal place where the Great Powers previously exerted their political and economic influence on the Middle East. Moreover, Ankara threatened to destabilise the imaginative geography of the Orient which had long had in Constantinople one of its most evocative and enduring fulcrums. The end of Ottoman rule provided a shock therapy for the so-called 'stambulimia' that had affected western culture over the long nineteenth century.⁶ Consequently, a new appetite was

whetted by the forlorn Anatolian town that became at once the seat and symbol of New Turkey.

Amidst the reorganisation of the former Ottoman territories, the birth of the Turkish Republic altered the coordinates of the traditional journey to the East. While updating their itineraries, western travellers had to review the vocabulary and imagery inherited from the Orientalist tradition. Conventional views of the Orient as a homogeneous entity – typically portrayed as static, immutable, and alien to historical progress – proved inadequate to apprehend a fast-changing landscape marked by the rise of nationalist movements and widespread claims of independence. As Said pointed out, the ‘civilizational contacts’ between East and West were redefined after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.⁷ The growing uncertainty vis-à-vis the Middle East unsettled the coordinates through which the West had long been representing its geographic and cultural *other*: ‘The Orient now appeared to constitute a challenge, not just to the West in general, but to the West’s spirit, knowledge, and imperium.’⁸ While the critique of Orientalism has made significant inroads in architectural history,⁹ the urban dimension of this challenge has not been fully examined as yet.¹⁰

Against this background, the present study investigates the role of republican Ankara as a terrain of cross-cultural encounters between Europe and Turkey. This critical inquiry is informed by cultural and post-colonial theories that, in the wake of Said’s work, have deconstructed the East/West polarity and called into question the monolithic notion of Orientalism itself. The work of writers such as Mary Louise Pratt and Lisa Lowe are of especial relevance here. In her critique of the western monopoly on knowledge and interpretation of the world, Pratt has unpacked the formation of a collective European subject and its ‘obsessive need to present and represent its peripheries and its others continually to itself’.¹¹ As we shall see, that urge pervaded the accounts of Ankara produced by western travellers in the 1920s and 1930s, albeit in different and often contradictory ways.

Internal differences to this discourse were no less significant than recurrences and regularities. In introducing the discontinuities that mark the wide-ranging literature surveyed in this essay, it is useful at this point to mention ‘the nonequivalence of various orientalisms’ noted by Lowe, who has highlighted the multiplicity of western voices that historically contributed to codify the Orient. Such voices cannot be entirely assimilated to European colonial practices as earlier accounts of Orientalism did. While Said’s original study focused on the colonial practices fostered by the French and British Empires, other European powers rose to prominence in the late nineteenth century and Germany in particular developed strong economic and political ties with the Ottoman Empire. This caveat is

particularly relevant to the study of republican Ankara, which constituted a particular 'contact zone' situated outside the boundaries of Europe's colonial geographies: a meeting place between the New Turkey projected towards the West and a fractured Europe searching for clues to a changing Orient while striving to redefine its own identity.¹² In order to map out this contact zone, it should be useful briefly to delineate its architectural and urban context with the help of recent historiography informed by cultural theories.

Modernism and Kemalism

Republican Ankara was at once the laboratory of Turkish nation building and its exemplary showcase.¹³ The construction of the modern capital was not a uniform process, however, as its initial stages were characterised by distinct architectural approaches. The early public buildings were designed in an eclectic idiom known as Ottoman revivalism, or 'First National Style', mostly by the Turkish architects Vedat Tek and Kemalettin Bey (respectively trained in Paris and Berlin) and the Levantine Italian architect Giulio Mongeri.¹⁴ Yet the Republic's quest for modernity gradually extended to the realms of building, planning, and public art. A wave of 'new architecture' (*yeni mimari*) swept along in the second half of the 1920s and held sway through the 1930s as several European practitioners, mostly from Austria and Germany, took up influential posts in Turkey as teachers, consultants, and designers.¹⁵

Renowned architects such as Clemens Holzmeister, Ernst Egli, Robert Orley, and, later, Bruno Taut, were entrusted to give shape to the new capital, thereby setting a model for the wider urbanization of the country. They were responsible for designing key buildings that embodied the social and political life of the Republic, from banks and ministries to schools and housing. The shift to modernism was so radical that a new building such as the Audit Court, constructed in 1925 by the Turkish architect Nazım Bey in the First National Style, was given a thorough facelift by Ernst Egli only five years later so as to appear unmistakably modern.¹⁶ The works and ideas of European architects, in turn, exerted a strong influence on the generation of Turkish architects who later took over the task of building the capital, giving rise to what has been termed 'Second National Style'.¹⁷

Much like architecture and public art, modern town planning too was imported from Europe. The Berlin-based architect and professor Hermann Jansen won the international competition for the Ankara master plan in 1928 with a scheme that was inspired by the Garden City movement and the *Siedlung* models developed in Weimar Germany.¹⁸ Jansen's plan preserved the historical Citadel as a 'city crown'

and laid out the urban extension around two intersecting axes running approximately North-South and East-West. Adopted in revised form in 1932, this scheme retained many features of a previous one drawn by another German architect, Carl Christoph Lörcher, as early as 1924-25 - the first major step in the planning of modern Ankara.¹⁹

In recent years, the remodelling of Ankara has been at the centre of a broader reassessment of modernism and nation building in Turkey.²⁰ Critical approaches informed by cultural theories and area studies have shed light onto the social, cultural, and political conditions underlying the construction of the new capital, while a number of case studies have shed light on to its planning, architecture, public art, and visual representations.²¹ Two scholarly works are of particular relevance to the present discussion. In her groundbreaking study of Turkish architectural culture in the early-Republican period, Sibel Bozdoğan has unpacked the ways in which architecture became an instrument of Kemalist ideology and was used as a form of 'visible politics'.²² Within this context, Bozdoğan refers to Ankara as 'one of the earliest manifestations of the historical alliance of modernism with nation building and state power'.²³ As we have seen, it took some time for this alliance to cement, since the first endeavours to shape the capital's identity were marked by the pursuit of an eclectic architectural style. It was only in the late 1920s that architecture began to reflect the Republic's secularist and westernist ethos, as European modernism was adopted to give shape to the Kemalist ideology.

The circulation of ideas that characterised this historical process has recently been investigated by Esra Akcan through the concept of 'cultural translation'. This is a useful category for understanding the systematic import of European models in Ankara, which informed the housing policies of the early Republic as well as the institutional architecture that gave the capital its public image. As Akcan points out, 'The Kemalist modernization process relied on the premise that Europeaness was smoothly translatable into Turkey, even if it had to be inserted from above.'²⁴ This top-down process took place under the single-party system that was consolidated in 1930, when the principles of Kemalism were fully articulated and the ruling Republican People's Party (CHP) took a firmer grip on power. The act of grafting European models onto the Turkish context reflected the determination of the ruling elite to adopt the forms as well as principles of western civilization.

Combined with the cultural theories outlined above, these critical appraisals of Ankara's modernism provide a textured background for this essay. The question posed in the introduction can now be reformulated as follows: while European architecture and planning were translated in the Turkish context to give a spatial form

to the new Republic, how were their manifestations in turn read, deciphered, and interpreted in the West? In other words, how was Ankara's modernism *re-translated* within European discourse? To address these questions means to foreground a body of sources that have remained tangential to architectural historiography so far, being mostly confined to footnotes. With a focus on the representations of Ankara contained in a variety of texts published in the 1920s and 1930s, the following analysis aims to interrogate the role played by this modern capital in shaping the western imagination of New Turkey.

Capital of effort and work

The making of modern Ankara attracted a great deal of international attention from the outset. Early-1920s descriptions were often rather buoyant, reflecting the buzz of excitement that animated the new capital. Western observers witnessed a remarkable turn of events in a place that, however rough and inhospitable, was widely felt to be unique. As early as 1922, the French author Jean Schlicklin described the centre of the nascent Turkish state as 'undoubtedly the most extraordinary capital in the world.'²⁵ In a book titled *Angora...L'aube de la Turquie nouvelle (1919-1922)*, Schlicklin narrated the events leading up to the 'dawn of new Turkey' and offered a glimpse of the 'young capital' - known in the West as Angora until the 1930s. With the exception of a few cafés and a cinema showing old films, the town offered limited comfort to deputies, functionaries and workers, all of whom had to live in precarious conditions. In spite of this, the author rejoiced in the vibrant atmosphere of the place and paid tribute to Kemal's authority in spearheading the new Republic. As foreign visitors set off to Anatolia in growing numbers, the identification of the Turkish capital with the nation's leader was to become a leitmotif of their travel accounts.²⁶

Most fervent among them was Grace Ellison, an English writer and suffragette who advocated the struggle for women's rights in Turkey. Her 1923 travelogue, *An Englishwoman in Angora*, was intended to ease the tension between Britain and Turkey and to introduce the English-speaking reader to the momentous changes taking place in Anatolia.²⁷ After an initial moment of disorientation, Ellison found in Ankara the site of an extraordinary enterprise: 'In all my wanderings, East and West, over Europe and America,' she wrote, 'I have nowhere been so much thrilled by a dominating sense of "real effort" as at Angora.'²⁸ After interviewing Kemal, she commended his western-minded leadership as a positive progress towards democracy that should be welcome by Europeans. The visit to 'Holy Angora' was described as an almost mystical experience, summed up in the chapter heading:

'The Marvellous Atmosphere of a Great Birth'. For Ellison, the new town arising from the barren Anatolian steppes enhanced the spiritual dimension of a journey that was akin to a secular pilgrimage. Half-a-decade later, these early impressions were confirmed and updated in another travel book, in which she characterised the relentless works going on in the capital as 'an epic of modern Europe.'²⁹

The recognition of Turkey's modern project was often expressed through analogies, and early-Republican Ankara drew comparisons with another western epic: that of the American frontier. The philosopher and psychologist John Dewey travelled to Anatolia in the summer of 1924 to advise the Turkish Government on its education policy. In the subsequent article 'Angora, The New', published in the aptly-titled journal *The New Republic*,³⁰ Dewey described a place ripe with ambitions and ambiguities. The ancient settlement perched on a hill contrasted with the burgeoning new town underneath, where houses and roads were built at a frantic pace.³¹ The tension between old and new was to become a recurring theme in western accounts of Ankara. In Dewey's mind, this contrast summed up the conundrum of the young Republic: 'It is paradoxical that it should be necessary for a nation to go into Asia in order to make sure that it is to be Europeanized. [...] And history itself is an incredible paradox, of which the mingling of old and new in Angora is but a symbol.'³² Despite the apparent contradictions, this author expressed his admiration for Turkey's 'heroic venture' and, similarly to Ellison, maintained that it should be supported by the West.

Dewey's commentary was not a mere endorsement made by a policy advisor, but rather a passionate, personal plea that reflected the philosopher's own identity. Indeed, Dewey went so far as to liken the 'pioneer spirit' he felt in Ankara to the epic of the American West, a comparison that was meant to validate the New Turkey in the eyes of his fellow citizens.³³ His writings remind us that, although the vast majority of published accounts were by European writers, the western perspective was not limited to Europe alone. In the eyes of reformist intellectuals either side of the Atlantic, Ankara came to symbolise the social and political change that was bringing the East ever closer to the West. Authors such as Ellison and Dewey took up the challenge to describe this emerging reality: in their respective narratives, the new capital was placed at the centre of a moral geography whose coordinates were assimilated to familiar ones.

In the first years of the Republic, there also emerged the first attempts to advocate the new Ankara as an incarnation of Mittel-European models. An early source displaying this attitude is the 1924 book, *Angora-Konstantinopel: Ringende Gewalten* ('Angora-Constantinople: Wrestling Powers'), by Karl Klinghardt.³⁴ A military engineer who had collaborated with the Ottoman army during the First World

War, Klinghardt discussed the 'big city' questions (*Großstadtfragen*) facing the newly founded Republic with regard to Constantinople, Smyrna, and Angora. His account shared with those mentioned above an intent to dispel anti-Turkish prejudices by informing the reader about the radical changes brought about by the Republic. However, if writers such as Ellison and Dewey embraced a visionary project to which they felt a personal and cultural affinity, this German author put forward a more detached analysis that claimed to fulfil the reader's 'wish for objectivity'.³⁵ Klinghardt's text combined a close observation of the town's topography and resources with comments on its planned development that showed his familiarity with Lörcher's scheme. A balance of tradition and modernity was seen as the key to ensuring the coexistence of old and new in the capital, thus reconciling the 'wrestling powers' at work in Turkey. By stressing the involvement of 'German forces' (*deutsche Kräfte*) in the making of modern Ankara, Klinghardt prefigured later attempts to validate the capital as an emanation of Mittel-European models.

Aside from their different perspectives, these early writings testify that Ankara attracted considerable attention since the early 1920s. While westerners' impressions were not always flattering, the prevailing response that registered in this period was a sympathetic one, marked by positive trust and often admiration. The exceptional situation of a modern town rising in the midst of Anatolia was widely recognised, and by the end of the decade Ankara was still branded 'the most extraordinary capital in the world'.³⁶ A different set of views emerged once the new town had begun to take shape. Western visitors were often disappointed by a planning experiment that looked to them like a poor copy of European towns. Hence, Ankara was varyingly portrayed as incongruous, inauthentic, or plainly inadequate. The image of a modern capital rising in the midst of a 'desert' was a recurring trope of the travel accounts published between the late 1920s and early 1930s, as evidenced by the French and Italian texts examined below.

Capital in a desert

In his 1929 travelogue *D'Angora à Vilna* ('From Angora to Vilnius'), the journalist and aviator José Le Boucher welcomed the drive to modernisation that brought Turkey ever closer to Europe. He even predicted, rather optimistically, that the time-worn, picturesque vision of the Orient was bound to vanish forever. He turned around Rudyard Kipling's famous dictum, 'The East is East, West is West', and asserted that 'The Orient is no longer the Orient, at least in Turkey.'³⁷ And yet, the journey to what he called the 'town in the desert' did not live up to his expectations. This French author was skeptical about the future of Ankara, which, in his view, was destined to

remain a mere 'city of bureaucrats'.³⁸ The 'all-new, all-white, ultra-modern' capital appeared to him as an untidy *melange* of buildings and styles assembled without any consistency or originality.³⁹ It looked, in short, like 'a mushroom-town' (*une ville champignon*).⁴⁰

Le Boucher's impression of the new urban development contrasted with that of the old town, which harboured the traces of a rich and layered history. This tension encapsulated the alleged 'mistake' of New Turkey: that is, the attempt to forge a new nationalism based on a 'deified revolutionary spirit' rather than on people's pride in their collective past.⁴¹ The association of this nationalist spirit with German models made it unpalatable to a writer who was active in the French monarchist movement. While approving in principle of Turkey's modernising process, Le Boucher criticized its breakneck pace and its resulting forms. He warned against the inherent dangers of such a rapid transformation for Turkish society, which, revisiting an old Orientalist trope, he compared to an adolescent coming to terms with its own life.

This lukewarm response was not isolated in the French-speaking world. In a book about Kemal published also in 1929, the Swiss journalist Paul Gentizon offered a bleak description of the new Ankara as an 'immense building site'.⁴² This author acknowledged the President's will to create a modern capital and the major feat of regenerating the insalubrious and semi-ruined Anatolian town in the space of few years only. While praising the Turks' spirit of abnegation, Gentizon was disappointed by the actual form of the new capital, whose plan reminded him of that of Potsdam. The author found the one- and two-storey residential buildings that dotted the landscape rather anonymous, and regretted that a more traditional ('turco-byzantine') style had not been chosen instead.⁴³ Ankara remained nonetheless an extraordinary place that represented 'the first attempt to create in Turkey a town, even a capital, entirely Turkish, in which the new society [...] will be able to live in European fashion'.⁴⁴

The tension between modernity and tradition was also a concern for the Italian author Corrado Alvaro, who journeyed through Anatolia in 1931 and compiled his *Viaggio in Turchia* the following year.⁴⁵ A native of the southern region of Calabria, Alvaro had explored the contradictions of modernity in rural Italy before he set out to report on the political and social change occurring in Turkey. This author's impressions were further inflected by his anti-fascist politics: although he recognised the key role played by Kemal in building a new nation, he had misgivings about the elevation of a political leader to the status of 'prophet'. Alvaro dwelled at length on the contrasts he witnessed in Ankara, where he found the 'boldest mix of desert and civilization'.⁴⁶ The social landscape revealed the signs of an 'artificial life' in which

traditional practices and habits, notably those brought in by Anatolian peasants, were dramatically altered by the effects of rapid urbanization. Ankara appeared to Alvaro as 'a city of nomads', not unlike a tented camp but a fixed one.⁴⁷ He argued that the urban layout merely reproduced European models while ignoring the climatic and topographic conditions of the site. Wide avenues, large parks, and spaced-out buildings were deemed to be ill-suited to a settlement built in the midst of the Anatolian plateau:

These are the inconveniences of architecture, which has become an overly generic and wrongly universalist art. Amidst a windy desert exposed to the greatest temperature variations, Ankara should have been less open: its streets and buildings should have protected each other, as even the most modest of villages teaches us.⁴⁸

While other authors dismissed Ankara as a doomed project, Alvaro held it up as a distorted mirror of European supremacy. His disenchantment with the 'capital of solitude' stemmed from a deeper anxiety about the impact of modernity on different peoples and places. To this author, the rise of the Turkish capital represented the levelling power of western civilization, whose all-pervasive force was extending its grip into the Middle East. His overall impression was that of an extraordinary yet unsettling place pervaded by a feeling of 'modern disquiet'.⁴⁹

Alvaro's account was one of the most insightful of the period, and his self-reflective critique of western modernity stands out from the genre of Turkey travelogues. However, his perception of Ankara was not isolated either. A similar discontent was shared by another Italian writer, Antonio Aniante, who published a book about Kemal a year later, in 1933.⁵⁰ Aniante observed that the more Ankara grew, the more it lost its original, symbolic meaning. After the early days when ministers used to sleep in huts, soldiers in tents, and ambassadors in carriages at the train station, the capital had been equipped with modern comforts and begun to look increasingly familiar to Europeans: it had all but lost its romantic appeal to those in search of exotic thrills. The author believed that Kemal's political parable was in decline and doubted that the town rising 'in the midst of the desert' would remain capital for long. He characterised it as 'an artificial greenhouse, a marvel created by human genius, a scientific vision that will have to vanish.'⁵¹ He predicted that this modernist laboratory was bound to change forever the geography of the Middle East: 'Angora', as he still called it, 'is the first great example of neo-oriental civilization with which tomorrow's Europeans will have to reckon.'⁵² Even though the novelty of New

Turkey was openly recognised, the term 'neo-oriental' signalled a clear reluctance to associate it too closely with the West.

The texts outlined in this section contain some of the most significant accounts of Ankara published by European writers between the late 1920s and early 1930s. These writings reveal, in different guises, a widespread discontent for a town that was often described as 'capital in a desert'. A seeming paradox emerges from the travel literature of the period: while Turkey's ruling elites were seeking to modernise the capital by importing architectural and planning models from Europe, European observers themselves often lamented that Ankara was not built according to local criteria. A major bone of contention was the decision to adopt specifically German models, which was variously criticized on political as well as pragmatic grounds by French and Italian commentators alike. More generally, these texts registered the challenge posed by Ankara to the West, a challenge that put the edifice of Orientalism to the test yet also proved its stubborn resilience – as the following example demonstrates better than any other. [Insert Figures 1 and 2 here]

An artificial town devoid of atmosphere

The critique of Ankara as a place without distinct shape or character featured not only in travel writings but also in a novel by Claude Farrère, *Les quatre dames d'Angora* ('The Four Ladies of Angora'), published by Flammarion in the series 'L'amour' in 1933.⁵³ In this rare case of European fiction set in the republican capital,⁵⁴ the French author used the genre of the romantic novel to express his critique of the Kemalist project epitomised by Ankara.

The plot hinges on the arrival in Ankara of two Frenchmen who first met on the Anatolia Express train from Istanbul, the main conduit for eastbound travellers coming from Europe. Through the eyes of these characters, the author evoked an urban landscape marked by isolated buildings, soulless gardens, and nondescript open spaces. Wide gaps were particularly noticeable along the main avenue connecting the Ulus district at the feet of the Citadel with the southern extension on the hill of Çankaya. The urban ensemble was compared by the narrator to an unfinished draft that a negligent town planner had abandoned halfway through. One of the protagonists, Monsieur Villandry, described the patchy scenery in a way that left no doubt as to the setting in which the story unfolded: "Let's not judge Turkey from a handful of houses that were erroneously scattered around by bad geographers where they shouldn't have!"⁵⁵ A fleeting chance to redeem the town's appearance presented itself at night, when this character was struck by the uncanny spectacle offered by the 'large triumphal avenue':

Two parallel roadways framed a large central pavement and two sidewalks framed the roadways. The whole was sumptuously lit up by a triple range of electrical lamp-posts whose powerful bulbs illuminated the pavements and the road even more brightly than Parisian boulevards. [...] a fantastic snake of fire which seemed to flee who-knows-where, into the darkness beyond the visible horizon. And it was beautiful. 'Infinitely more beautiful,' thought Villandry, 'than anything which might be seen here in broad daylight...'⁵⁶

This passage alludes to the ephemeral, mirage-like quality of a modern town that seduced the visitor only by night. The nocturnal vision conjured up a bright yet empty place, which the author compared to 'a Sahara'. In other words, the image of the town *in* the desert gave way to that of the town *as* desert. Ultimately Ankara turned out to be so tedious in daytime as to persuade the protagonists to turn back to Istanbul, now in the company of two lady friends.

Farrère's novel mapped the western fantasy of an eroticised and exoticised Orient onto the changing reality of New Turkey. This fantasy was vividly portrayed on the book cover, illustrated by the French artist Édouard Chimot (Fig. 3). [Insert Figure 3 here] The drawing set up a sharp contrast between two female figures – one veiled, the other scantily dressed – against a prominent mosque in the background. In this almost caricatural image, the tension between modernity and tradition was evoked through gendered signifiers of lust and mystery. The artist captured the main thrust of the novel by reducing 'Angora' to a hunting ground for the European *flanêur*. Modern architecture did not feature in the cover illustration any more than in the text. Quite evidently, the mosque in the drawing symbolised the old imperial centre rather than the new capital, which was also known as 'city without minarets' since no major mosque was built there until the 1950s.⁵⁷ By recasting the new capital against a familiar Orientalist imagery, *Les quatre dames d'Angora* marked an attempt to emasculate the Turkish Republic and invalidate its claims to sovereignty, modernity and secularism.

Afterwards, reflecting on his wide-ranging travels to Asia, Farrère related the brief journey to Ankara that set the scene for his novel.⁵⁸ While other observers had commented on the social and spatial incongruities they perceived in the modern town, he despised it primarily on aesthetic grounds. Accordingly, Ankara was built by a people 'without faith' who had lost the sense of 'pure beauty' to be found in Constantinople. Dismissing the new capital as a mere urban jumble, Farrère mourned the loss of a mythical yet familiar Orient that European turcophiles were

nostalgically attached to. Having admitted that the grandeur of Ottoman monuments was impossible to match, Farrère still deplored the decision to discard a 'magnificent past' in favour of a 'petty future'.⁵⁹ While Alvaro criticised the 'universalist' character of modern architecture for being impractical, Farrère lamented its lack of beauty and coherence. He described Ankara as a 'perfectly ugly' place ('an artificial town devoid of atmosphere'), and went on to lament: 'Apparently, our epoch is no longer favourable to architecture.'⁶⁰

All but forgotten today, Farrère was a prolific, prize-winning author who styled himself as the literary heir of Pierre Loti, the naval officer turned writer who had established an intimate bond with Constantinople and died on the eve of the Republic.⁶¹ Farrère himself had trained as a naval officer, then gained wide notoriety as an author of exotic novels in the early twentieth century: adopting a dramatic realism that was in vogue then, he revived the literary imagination of the Orient nurtured by French authors, from Chateaubriand to Flaubert, over the nineteenth century, and carried forward by Loti in a more lyrical vein.⁶² Claiming Loti's mantle, Farrère strove to adapt the Orientalist repertory to the context of New Turkey. However, by the early 1930s, the journey to the East was no longer a pilgrimage to an exotic place associated with a bygone time. As transpires from *Les quatre dames d'Angora*, the republican capital disturbed that imaginative geography and provoked a last-ditch attempt to cling to a mythical world before it disappeared.

Appeal of the future

The impressions of Ankara outlined above attest to the diverse discourse that emerged in Europe during the first decade of the Republic. If one indication can be drawn from these sources, it is that the process of cultural translation whereby modern planning and architecture were adopted to fashion the new capital did not suffice to 'westernise' it in the eyes of Europeans. A *charme offensive* was designed by the Turkish Government on the tenth anniversary of the Republic. If the year 1923 marked a fresh start in the history of modern Ankara, 1933 was a turning point for its representation to the outside world. The anniversary signalled a step change in the Kemalist propaganda. One of its main outcomes was the pocket book, *Ankara: Guide Touristique*, written by Ernest Mamboury and issued by the Ministry of Interiors (Fig. 4).⁶³ [Insert Figure 4 here] A French teacher at the renowned Lycée of Galatasaray, Mamboury had previously authored the first travel guide to Constantinople of the post-Ottoman era,⁶⁴ which the President of the Touring Club of Turkey endorsed as an example of 'objectivity and [...] scientific spirit, redeemed of all political propaganda.'⁶⁵ By 1933, the same claim could no longer be made with respect to the

Ankara guide. This detailed and well-illustrated book was, in effect, a tribute to the New Turkey as much as an informative vade mecum to its capital.

The guide opened with a comparison between the town's conditions observed in the early 1930s and those recorded at the inception of the Republic.⁶⁶ The list of improvements realised over the previous decade included the reclamation of the malaria-ridden marshes, the programme of 'hausmanisation' (sic) for the new town, and the construction of the whole gamut of buildings required by a capital city. As Mamboury put it suggestively, 'An invisible magic wand has transformed everything'.⁶⁷ Following the first 'political' moment, Ankara was said to be going through a 'constructive' period that would eventually allow the city to prosper economically and culturally. Having foregrounded the modern transformation of the capital, the author moved on to present its history and heritage: once again, it was the grafting of the new onto the old that gave Ankara its distinctive identity - hence its potential tourist appeal.

There was however a deeper political reason behind this tourist guidebook. Its deliberate aim was, in fact, to correct the unflattering image of Ankara spread by foreign commentators. Mamboury laid bare the stakes at the outset, where he asserted: 'These malevolent detractors create a state of mind that is unfavourable to the new capital, and quite unfairly so. Yet Ankara is proving what can be achieved by the will of a Government driven by the views of a great man and followed by a benevolent people.'⁶⁸ The alleged 'detractors' were not named, though Farrère was presumably on top of the list. In an attempt to countervail the critical views of the Republic and its capital, Mamboury blended the rhetoric of Kemalist propaganda with an exercise in what today would be called *city branding*.

This publication indicates that the campaign launched by the Turkish Government on the tenth anniversary of the Republic was dictated by an approach that was reactive as much as proactive. An array of mass media - such as film, exhibitions, and publications - were mobilised to disseminate a positive image of New Turkey at home and abroad. The Soviet Union was in the vanguard of visual propaganda and its influence was both direct and indirect. One of the most emblematic works produced in 1933 was the now-classic documentary, *Ankara: the Heart of Turkey*, directed by Sergei Yutkevich, which took its cue from the visit made by an official delegation to celebrate the friendship between the USSR and Turkey. In the build-up to the climactic scene, in which Atatürk delivers a speech to jubilant crowds, a unique sequence of aerial and ground shots depicted Ankara under construction.⁶⁹ While this film was primarily aimed at a Russian audience, Soviet art and culture also inspired the development of home-grown nationalist propaganda in

Turkey.

Its most pervasive tool was *La Turquie Kemaliste*, the illustrated magazine established in 1934 by the State Printing Office, led by Vedat Nedim Tör, after the model of *USSR in Construction*.⁷⁰ The first issue, published a year after Mamboury's guide, signalled a further intent to promote the capital as a travel destination. Under the title 'Il faut venir à Ankara' ('You must come to Ankara'), the eminent Turkish author Falih Rifki Atay invited foreign readers to discover in person the forward-looking spirit of a place that was teeming with energy and optimism: 'Coming to Ankara, you will see something wholly new: you will see the Invisible (*sic*) that is called *future*. Is that not an ineffable appeal for tourism?'⁷¹ (Fig. 5) **[Insert Figure 5 here]** In line with this message, from the second issue onwards a rubric titled 'Ankara construit' displayed the latest construction works in a modern visual language. It was at this point that photography was recognised as a powerful medium in forging the Republic's progressive imagery, and Tör hired the Austrian photographer Othmar Pferschy to document the new country in the making.⁷² Pferschy's pictures featured prominently in *La Turquie Kemaliste* and various other publications and exhibitions of the 1930s.⁷³ As we shall see, they established a canonical repertoire that also served to illustrate foreign accounts of modern Ankara.

The involvement of a photographer like Pferschy and a teacher-cum-writer like Mamboury evidence that Europeans were directly engaged in producing a national narrative for the Turkish Republic. As Bozdoğan has pointed out, the nation-building project was inseparable from a longing for recognition from the West: 'The republican need for self-affirmation through Western eyes appears to have been central to the cultural and political consciousness of the period.'⁷⁴ While European writers and image-makers embedded in state institutions took an active role in this process, the ultimate legitimacy was sought from outside observers – the standard bearers, as it were, of the hegemonic western gaze.

In this respect, the endeavours of Kemalist propaganda were not in vain. In an editorial published in *La Turquie Kemaliste* in 1935, entitled 'Qu'attendons-nous de l'intellectuel occidental?' ('What do we expect from the western intellectual?'), Tör welcomed a positive shift in foreign attitudes towards his country.⁷⁵ This column lambasted the lazy attitude of intellectuals who had invariably failed to understand the peoples and lands fallen under the sphere of western influence – including the Ottoman Empire. Their intelligence, blinded by 'hallucination and fantasy', was awakened only when those countries took up an active role in the world scene, as was the case with republican Turkey. In Tör's words: 'At a time when the European hegemony dominated the entire world, the western intellectual's brain resembled in

fact a room plastered with mirrors, whereas today we see the same intellectuals freeing themselves of this prison of mirrors.⁷⁶ Not content with it, the author invited those intellectuals to visit Turkey in person and leave behind the prejudices derived from the 'morbid romanticism' and 'fake picturesque spirit' that, allegedly, still inflected their views.⁷⁷ This plea was made at a turning point when the early travellers' impressions of Ankara gave way to more systematic surveys of the town as a *fait accompli*.

The beauty of flat surfaces

By the mid-1930s, Ankara had acquired its modern physiognomy and became the subject of effective strategies of representation, from the outside as well as inside. While the image of the city was revamped by the Kemalist propaganda efforts, ever more elaborate descriptions came out of Europe. The work of German-speaking writers, in particular, complemented that of artists, architects, and planners who had been involved in remodelling the capital since the late 1920s. Their ranks were further expanded in 1933, when hundreds of academics ousted from German universities, many of them being Jewish refugees, were offered sanctuary in Turkey and became involved in the Republic's drive to modernise the higher education sector.⁷⁸ German was widely spoken in Ankara, and, not surprisingly, was also the language of the most comprehensive reviews of the new capital published at the time.

An oft-cited source from that period is Norbert von Bischoff's 1935 book, *Ankara: Eine Deutung des neuen Werdens in der Türkei* (literally, 'An interpretation of the new becoming in Turkey'), which offered a historical overview of the country's past and present.⁷⁹ Having served as a *chargé d'affaires* in the capital between 1930 and 1933, this Austrian diplomat intended to pay homage to the 'pragmatic revolution' led by Mustafa Kemal – known by then as Atatürk. Repeating a typical claim of objectivity, Bischoff vowed to paint a truthful picture of Turkey while eschewing the bias of 'occasional western spectators'.⁸⁰ In fact, his whole book reiterated several tropes put forward by foreign observers previously. Bischoff traced back the nomadic origins of the Turkish people and described Ankara as their 'first sedentary abode': a place where buildings had replaced tents once and for all. If Alvaro had likened Ankara to a tented camp, with an emphasis on its precarious conditions, Bischoff instead described the new town in terms of stability and rootedness. In his narrative, the heart of Turkey was also the 'hearth' around which a new homeland was built.

Contrary to Farrère's opinion, Bischoff ascribed the nation-building project to

an act of faith committed by a people that had 'come of age in the domain of civilization'.⁸¹ This recurring trope was backed up by the notion that Ankara was the first town built by Turks and, accordingly, constituted 'the living symbol of this tragic-heroic turn in Turkish life.'⁸² Bischoff's argument echoed the moral and spiritual overtones that can be detected in earlier writings such as Ellison's and Dewey's. By the mid-1930s, however, Ankara was no longer seen as a mere promise of modernity but as a full-fledged incarnation of it.

Architecture was central to this process. For Bischoff, Ankara's modern buildings manifested a desire to shake off the state of decay in which Anatolia had been dragged by the Ottomans. He selected for praise the İsmet İnönü Institute for Girls, a modernist architecture that embodied the radical reorganisation of the public education system. This secular reform was bound up with the new social role of the Turkish woman, whose emancipation from the yoke of Islamic tradition was a cornerstone of Atatürk's vision. As Bozdoğan has remarked, the ideology of the 'Kemalist woman' went hand in hand with the Kemalist approach to architecture:

Throughout the 1930s, modern architecture, modern Ankara, and modern women were connected in republican consciousness, and all three were associated with the qualities of beauty, youth, health, and progress – the qualities specifically idealized by the Kemalist *inkilap* [revolution] and repeatedly juxtaposed with their old counterparts.⁸³

The İnönü Institute combined these aspects in unique fashion. Designed by the Austrian architect Ernst Egli in 1930, the building stood out of the main avenue with its elongated, symmetrical volume combining horizontal lines with curved corners and vertical blocks at either end – an overt reference to the ocean-liner aesthetic which infused European modernism since the 1920s. Prior to Bischoff's account, Egli's design had been praised by foreign observers for its architectural qualities and become an iconic feature of the new Ankara.⁸⁴ The South-African architect Herbert McWilliams mentioned it in his travel book *The Diabolical*, the tale of a car journey from Palestine to London undertaken with a group of friends in 1934.⁸⁵ Having marvelled at the built environment he saw in Ankara, where he and his party transited en route to the Balkans, McWilliams concluded his description of the capital with the following comment:

There was also a huge high school for girls, like the most recent attempts at modernity, aping the horizontal decks of a liner at the expense of the vertical

supports of a building. Even in the middle of Asia Minor, it seemed, buildings were made to look like steamers! One might have been in Hamburg.⁸⁶

While McWilliams admired this building for its bold, clear-cut, German-looking volume, Bischoff situated it within a moral appraisal of the modern capital. Accordingly, the ethics of Turkey's modernising process had its aesthetic counterpart in 'the sober beauty of large flat surfaces'.⁸⁷ By comparing the Kemalist reforms with the character of Ankara's architecture, of which his fellow countrymen Holzmeister and Egli were the chief designers, Bischoff laid an implicit claim to the new capital as an emanation of Mittel-European models – a claim already foreshadowed by Klinghardt a decade before.

Victory of the straight line

The rhetoric of entitlement culminated in *Die Türkei von Heute* ('Turkey To-Day'), a 1936 book by Stephan Ronart that prompted English, French, and Turkish translations in the space of two years.⁸⁸ Better known for his later *Lexicon der arabischen Welt* ('Concise Encyclopaedia of Arabic Civilization'), Ronart turned his attention to Turkey in the mid-1930s after writing about south-eastern European countries.⁸⁹ His views of the new Republic were closely aligned with the Kemalist propaganda, as reviewers did not fail to notice.⁹⁰ Largely overlooked by architectural historiography so far, this book contains one of the most extensive and provocative accounts of early-republican Ankara, and for this reason it warrants closer scrutiny. [Insert Fig. 6 here]

Similarly to Bischoff, Ronart addressed the reader with a routine preamble in which he dismissed the West's fascination with the 'glamour of the East' as a mere tourist cliché, and pledged to 'speak only about things which are really Turkish.'⁹¹ He then described the rise of New Turkey as the climax of a historical process whereby the past, present, and future of the nation were bound up in an organic cycle. Revisiting a typical Orientalist topos, the author associated various kinds of circular patterns – from the seasonal cycles of nature to curvilinear motifs in art - with Eastern civilizations, and linear ones with the rational logic of the western mind. Curved and straight lines were understood to be the poles of a historical dialectic: that is, '[t]wo diametrically opposed ways of thought and action, two opposed conceptions of the world and of life'.⁹² According to Ronart, this dichotomy had been recomposed after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, when growing demands for democracy and self-determination spread across the Middle East. 'This impulse was given to the Orient by Turkish force,' he stated, 'and the inspiration came from

Anatolia.⁹³ While the West underestimated the signs of change, Atatürk presided over the unification of these worldviews from his Ankara stronghold. The authority of this leader, hailed as the master builder of his time, led the author to envisage not only a new social and political course for the region but the beginning of an altogether different epoch in world history: one in which, after the supposed end of imperialism, the very ideas of East and West would dissolve and mankind would eventually unite.

This idealist vision was animated by a progressive ethos, as Ronart championed the Asian movements of resistance against European imperialism. Amidst the rebellions that spread across the continent, from Turkey and Syria to India and China, Atatürk was regarded as the only leader who succeeded in organising a modern nation state open to the latest developments in culture and technology, and in shaking off the economic and political control of the Great Powers. However, while celebrating the Kemalist revolution as the triumph of western rationalism, Ronart implicitly reinstated a position of hegemony that found in modern architecture one of its chief expressions. According to his vision, the emergence of modern Ankara represented a key moment in the 'natural development' of the Orient:

It was at Ankara that the stoic opportunism of the old oriental Ottoman world gave way to the strict logic of the Occident with its reasoning from premise to consequence. [...] It was at Ankara that the tangential curves and spirals of Turkish energy were transformed into a straight line leading directly towards the desired goal.⁹⁴

The identification of the straight line with the path to modernity had a rather broad currency in interwar Europe. One of its most popular formulations was put forward by Le Corbusier in the opening chapter of his first book on town planning, *Urbanisme*. His binary opposition between 'the pack-donkey's way and man's way' was based on a fundamental antithesis between chaos and order: the latter was said to prevail in cities based on rectilinear layouts, such as the American gridiron, whereas the former was said to rule over settlements built around winding roads, as typical of medieval town centres in Europe. Le Corbusier held the Viennese architect Camillo Sitte responsible for having sparked off a 'glorification of the curved line' through his influential book, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* ('City Planning According to Artistic Principles'), initially published in 1889.⁹⁵ What is interesting in this context is that the early plans for Ankara – drawn up by Lörcher

and Jansen - were both influenced by Sitte's principles.⁹⁶ It is somewhat ironical, then, that the new town developed on the basis of their plans should have been regarded as the 'triumph' of the straight line.⁹⁷ Whether or not Ronart was familiar with urban theories, he made no concession to them in his populist account of New Turkey.

His argument was underpinned by the joint observation of Ankara's old and new architecture. [Insert Figures 7, 8 here] The 'impulse towards the straight line' was detected in the oriel windows projecting over the curving alleys of the Old Town (Fig. 7) as well as in the roads and buildings of the New Town ('Yeni-Shehir'), where the modern zeitgeist was more palpably at home: 'In Yeni-Shehir aesthetic unity has found its values in the organic harmony of material and modern technique and the purpose of architectural construction.'⁹⁸ Before attaining such unity, though, tentative efforts to find a compromise with tradition had marked the 'fumbings and hesitations of the early days'.⁹⁹ Ronart brushed aside the historical revivalism of those 'apprentice years', when architecture was still tainted by Seljuk and Ottoman motifs, and heaped praise on the modernist buildings 'composed of rectangular surfaces of concrete and glass, which blend and combine with the square towers and walls of the fortress.'¹⁰⁰ Whereas Bischoff had appreciated the beauty of flat surfaces, Ronart went further on in an attempt to legitimise the forms of modernist architecture through comparison with the vernacular heritage of the Citadel. No mention was made of individual architects or their provenance. The argument simply proceeded from the assumption that the Turkish Government had called upon the 'latest' and 'best' knowledge available at the time to design the new capital.

Once again, the Institute for Girls was highlighted, this time along with the School of Building Construction and Public Works, as an exemplar of the secular education system adopted by the Republic. The former's illustration was instrumental to the author's narrative, as the straight lines of the building were further reinforced by the kerbs of the traffic island in the foreground (Fig. 8). In bringing out the orthogonal forms of this architecture, however, the wide-angle view effectively obliterated its round edges – an expressionist feature that distinguished Egli's design from Holzmeister's more austere classicism. Above and beyond its subject, this photograph indicates that Ronart's argument was backed up by visual images, signalling a wider trend in the literature on Turkey of the 1930s.

Gazes and images

As mentioned above, the propaganda effort undertaken by the Turkish Government from 1933 onwards resulted in a greater availability of images to authors and

editors. Ronart's argument lent itself to visual illustration and *Die Türkei von Heute* included a significant number of photographs – in contrast with Bischoff's *Ankara*, for instance, which had none. Most of the pictures in the book were supplied by the Press Office at the Ministry of the Interior, which acted as a clearing house of information for the foreign press. The historical progress from the age of 'curves and spirals' to that of 'straight lines', for instance, was visualised by two photographs depicting respectively the spiral staircase of a mosque in Kütahya and a railway running through the Taurus mountains. Other illustrations showed artworks, buildings, places, and people in a similar vein to the Kemalist propaganda, including some of Pferschy's popular shots of the new Ankara.

The most powerful image of the entire book was arguably the one in the frontispiece: the photograph of a bronze head of Atatürk staring back at the reader with his famously piercing gaze (Fig. 6). The sculpture was a work by Josef Thorak, the Austrian-German artist who also carved the imposing stone figure of Atatürk in the Security Monument (centrepiece of the new town square in Ankara's Kızılay district, where the new governmental complex designed by Holzmeister was built).¹⁰¹ In the frontispiece of *Die Türkei von Heute* the father of the nation was presented, quite literally, as a living monument. This image became an icon of Kemalist propaganda. It took centre stage in the national exhibition 'Turkey: the Country of Beauty, History and Work' that was on display at Ankara's Exhibition Hall in 1936,¹⁰² and, from October 1938 onwards, was used to illustrate the cover of *La Turquie Kemaliste*. In the context of Ronart's book, this portrait had a double function: while its manifest goal was to introduce republican Turkey through an effigy of its leader, the latent message was one of entitlement over a country that was built, symbolically as well as materially, by Europeans. This layered image encapsulates, perhaps better than any other, the interplay of gazes between Turkey and Europe that took place during the early-Republican period, with Ankara as the main 'contact zone'.

As we have seen, the proprietary attitudes displayed by European writers intent on describing the new capital were closely related to the quest of recognition through western eyes that animated the Republic. A tangible manifestation of this nexus is shown by the volume *Yabancı gözüyle Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si* ('The Turkish Republic through Foreign Eyes'), a collection of writings about New Turkey published in 1938 by the Ministry of the Interior.¹⁰³ The appeal to 'western intellectuals' made by Tör in *La Turquie Kemaliste* had reaped fruits, and this anthology was a testament to the wide international interest in the emerging country. In a photocollage included in the book, the figure of Atatürk became part of the iconography of modern Ankara (Fig. 9) [Insert Figure 9 here] His portrait was

juxtaposed with views of recent constructions such as the Ankara stadium, the Security Monument, and the main town square in Ulus with the horse-riding statue of the leader in its midst - the same landmark featuring on the cover of Mamboury's guide and in a plethora of city views from the period. The nation's leader and its capital were closely associated to one another and often identified, in Turkey as well as abroad, to the point that Ankara was also dubbed 'Atatürk's city'. With Atatürk's demise, in 1938, and the outbreak of the Second World War a year later, the stream of foreign accounts that flourished in the first decade and a half of the Republic diminished considerably. The high-modernist phase of the early years was to remain also the period of most intense and contested representations of the Turkish capital.

Conclusion: fragments of a western discourse

This study of modern Ankara as seen through western eyes reveals a fractured discursive field. The body of sources surveyed in the essay presents different and often conflicting views of what the capital was, what it was not, and what it should have been in the mind of western observers. Their impressions were extremely diverse, and it would not be possible to reduce them to a single point of view any more than it would be to presuppose a unitary 'western subject'. Interwar Europe was itself a highly fractionalised entity, and the tensions that simmered within its borders inflected the desires and anxieties that were projected onto New Turkey. It is nonetheless possible to identify, within this heterogeneous discourse, a set of recurring tropes that reveal distinct structures of feeling. A major shift took place from the initial moment, in which Ankara was widely regarded as an exciting promise of modernity, to the rather disenchanting perceptions that surfaced when the new town began to take shape. The early trope of the 'capital of effort and work' gave way to that of 'capital in the desert', as European travellers grappled with a place that did not fit in their familiar coordinates. This discourse, in turn, influenced the representations of Ankara that were produced in Turkey from 1933 onwards.

There were crucial differences, in particular, between authors who negated Ankara's modernism and those who embraced it, as evidenced by the two texts examined at greater length in the essay – those by Claude Farrère and Stephan Ronart. Situated at the opposite ends of the same Orientalist spectrum, these writings were driven by different impulses to discursively colonise Ankara. In *Les quatre dames d'Angora*, Farrère enunciated one of the most trenchant critiques of the new capital. His novel reflected the dilemma of a European intelligentsia confronted with the rise of a secular, independent, and republican country in place of the Ottoman Orient. While the social reforms inspired by European models were

widely praised in the West, the spatial form of this process (*also* inspired by European models) became a source of resentment in cultured circles, particularly in France. When judged on aesthetic grounds, Ankara appeared to desecrate the picturesque image of the Orient which had patiently been constructed over many decades. Farrère's response to this threat was to emasculate the symbol of New Turkey and restore the symbolic primacy of the old imperial capital as a familiar landscape.

If Farrère sought to *reorientalise* Ankara, as it were, Ronart tried to *occidentalise* it by holding it up as an ultimate example of European superiority. Placing the capital at the centre of a new world order, he detected the historical fulfilment of the 'straight line' in the works of modern architecture. This progressive argument departed from the traditional Orientalist discourse – mainly English and French - that posited an irreconcilable opposition between East and West. Echoing the work of other German-speaking authors, from Klinghardt to Bischoff, Ronart championed the modern path undertaken by New Turkey and rejected the nostalgic, picturesque vision that still prevailed elsewhere in Europe. And yet, while praising Atatürk's choice to set the country on course with western civilization, Ronart effectively reasserted the absolute mastery of the Occident over the Orient by other means.

This discourse as a whole shows that, over the first decade and a half of the Republic, Ankara exercised a powerful hold on western imagination. Its unexpected modernity posed a challenge to the conventional oppositions between East and West, thus destabilising the mythical imagery of the Orient that had long been nourished in European literature. The responses elicited by this modernist experiment expose the cracks of the Orientalist edifice, yet also show its remarkable resilience in the face of an unprecedented threat. When confronted with a strangely familiar reality, western observers deployed a variety of narrative strategies to analyse this threat away. Whether they denied or embraced Ankara's modernist project, their writings marked a sustained attempt to reclaim a position of hegemony to the West. The cross-cultural encounters that took place in this particular contact zone suggest that, while the East was no longer East, the West was still West and clinged on to its residual power, albeit in discordant and often conflicting ways that betrayed its internal contradictions.

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Figure captions:

Figure 1

Picture postcard with a view of Ankara looking towards the North-Northeast, 1927. The building in the centre is the Ministry of Health, designed by Theodor Jost: first example of modernist architecture in Ankara. Source: VEKAM Archives, Ankara.

Figure 2

View of Ankara looking towards the South-Southeast, with the main avenue and adjacent buildings, 1930. Source: VEKAM Archives, Ankara.

Figure 3

Claude Farrère, *Les quatre dames d'Angora* (Paris: Flammarion, 1933). Cover page illustrated by Édouard Chimot.

Figure 4

Ernest Mamboury, *Ankara: Guide Touristique* (Ankara: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prefecture of Ankara, 1933). Cover page.

Figure 5

Falih Rifki Atay, 'Il faut venir à Ankara', *La Turquie Kemaliste*, 1 (1934).

Figure 6

Stephan Ronart, *Turkey To-Day* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1938). Frontispiece with picture of a bronze head of Atatürk by Josef Thorak.

Figure 7

Stephan Ronart, *Turkey To-Day* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1938). Views of Ankara's Old Town.

Figure 8

Stephan Ronart, *Turkey To-Day* (London: Robert Hale Ltd, 1938). View of the İsmet İnönü Institute for Girls, Ankara, designed by Ernst Egli.

Figure 9

Photo-collage from *Yabancı gözüyle Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si* (Ankara: Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1938).

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¹ These themes have been at the centre of a wide-ranging debate in the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades. See, for instance: M. A. Caws, ed., *City Images: Perspectives from Literature, Philosophy and Film* (New York: Gordon & Breach, 1991); J. Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (London: Athlone Press, 1999); M. Balshow and L. Kennedy, eds., *Urban Space and Representation* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); R. Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

² Mustafa Kemal Pasha was the Commander in Chief of the Turkish Nationalist Movement and was elected President of the Turkish Republic in 1923. In 1934, he was bestowed the honorific name Atatürk, or 'father of the Turks'.

³ This was also the title of the International Docomomo Conference held in Ankara in September 2006.

⁴ For a survey of western travellers' accounts of Ankara prior to the twentieth century, see: T. M. Cross and G. Leiser, *A Brief History of Ankara* (Vacaville, CA: Indian Ford Press, 2000).

⁵ L. J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992).

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⁷ E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 248ff.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁹ See, for instance, J. Beaulieu and M. Roberts, eds., *Orientalism's Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ This lacuna was remarked by Peter Clark in a recent lecture: P. Clark, 'European Cities in a Globalising World', keynote lecture, 11th International Conference on Urban History, Prague, 29th August 2012.

¹¹ M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

¹² The term 'contact zone' is borrowed from Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.

¹³ For a recent reappraisal of the planning of Republican Ankara, see: D. Kacar, 'Ankara, a Small Town, Transformed to a Nation's Capital'. *Journal of Planning History*, 9/1 (2010), pp. 43-65.

¹⁴ Among these buildings were the second Grand National Assembly, the Ankara Palas hotel, the first museum, several banks and apartment blocks.

¹⁵ B. Nicolai, *Moderne und Exil: Deutschsprachige Architekten in der Türkei, 1925-1955* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1998).

¹⁶ The building is situated in a particularly sensitive spot, between the first and second Parliament buildings on Station Avenue, the road connecting the railway station with the main town square in Ulus.

¹⁷ Cf. İ. Aslanoğlu, *Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Mimarlığı* (Ankara: METU Faculty of Architecture Press, 1980).

¹⁸ E. Akcan, *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey, & the Modern House* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

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- ¹⁹ A. Cengizkan, *Ankara'nın İlk Planı 1924-25 Lörcher Planı* (Ankara: Ankara Enstitüsü Vakfı, 2004). The 1928 competition for a new master plan followed the municipality's decision to shelve Lörcher's scheme, which was deemed to be unsuitable to Ankara's needs.
- ²⁰ In Turkish culture, the term 'modernism' refers not only to artistic or cultural expressions but, more broadly, to the reformist moment associated with the advent of the Republic. Cf. A. Çınar, 'The Imagined Community as Urban Reality: The Making of Ankara', in A. Çınar and T. Bender, eds., *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 151-81.
- ²¹ See, for instance, two insightful case studies published recently in this journal: A. Cengizkan, 'The production of a mise en scène for a nation and its subjects: Clemens Holzmeister et al. in the Ministries Quarter for Ankara, Turkey'. *The Journal of Architecture*, 15/6 (2010), pp. 731-70. E. Altan Ergut, 'The Exhibition House in Ankara: building (up) the "national" and the "modern"'. *The Journal of Architecture*, 16/6 (2011), pp. 855-84.
- ²² S. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ²⁴ Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*, p. 51.
- ²⁵ J. Schlicklin, *Angora...L'aube de la Turquie nouvelle (1919-1922)* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1922), p. 103. This and all subsequent translations from non-English texts are by the author.
- ²⁶ See, for instance, B. Georges-Gaulis, *La nouvelle Turquie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1924).
- ²⁷ G. Ellison, *An Englishwoman in Angora* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1923).
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- ²⁹ G. Ellison, *Turkey to-Day* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1928), p. 35.
- ³⁰ J. Dewey, 'Angora, The New', in J. Ratner, ed., *Character and Events, vol. 1* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 333. Originally published in *The New Republic*, Oct. 15, 1924.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 334.
- ³³ See also E. Wolf-Gazo, 'John Dewey in Turkey: An Educational Mission'. *Journal of American Studies of Turkey*, 3 (1996), pp. 15-42.
- ³⁴ K. Klinghardt, *Angora-Konstantinopel: Ringende Gewalten* (Frankfurt: Frankfurter Societäts-Druckerei, 1924).
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ³⁶ N. Pavlova, *Au pays du Ghazi* (Paris: Editions de la Revue Mondiale, 1930).
- ³⁷ J. Le Boucher, *D'Angora à Vilna* (Paris: Éditions Prométhée, 1929), pp. 7-8.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ⁴² P. Gentizon, *Mustapha Kemal; ou, L'Orient en marche* (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1929), p. 318.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 319.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁴⁵ C. Alvaro, *Viaggio in Turchia* (Reggio Calabria: Falzea, 2003). The book was based on a series of travel correspondences published in the *La Stampa* newspaper.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵⁰ A. Aniante, *Mustapha Kémal. Le Loup gris d'Angora* (Paris: Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1934). The book was originally written in Italian and published in French translation. Aniante, whose real name was Antonio Rapisarda, was a playwright and journalist who lived in Paris when he published this work.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵³ C. Farrère, *Les quatre dames d'Angora* (Paris: Flammarion, 1933). I am grateful to Ali Cengizkan for bringing this book to my attention.

⁵⁴ Most notable within Turkish literature was the utopian novel *Ankara*, written by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu in 1934.

⁵⁵ Farrère, *Les quatre dames*, p. 47

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁵⁷ F. Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 91-92.

⁵⁸ C. Farrère, *Forces spirituelles de l'Orient. Inde - Chine - Japon - Turquie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1937).

⁵⁹ This conservative attitude can also be noted in Farrère's use of the old names of the main Turkish cities, Angora and Constantinople, in lieu of their new official denominations, Ankara and Istanbul.

⁶⁰ Farrère, *Forces spirituelles*, p. 229.

⁶¹ Claude Farrère was the nom de plume of Frédéric-Charles Bargone. A prolific author and winner of the Prix Goncourt, he became a member of the prestigious Académie Française in 1935.

⁶² Le Corbusier read Farrère's best-selling novel, *L'homme qui assassina* (1906), during his formative journey to the East.

⁶³ E. Mamboury, *Ankara: Guide Touristique* (Ankara: Home Ministry of Turkey and Prefecture of Ankara, 1933). I am grateful to Elvan Altan Ergut for bringing this book to my attention.

⁶⁴ E. Mamboury, *Constantinople: Tourists' Guide* (Istanbul: Rizzo and Son, 1924). The book was published with the official patronage of the Turkish Touring Club and the prefecture of Constantinople. It appeared in English, French, German, and Turkish.

⁶⁵ Emine Bey, 'Preface', in E. Mamboury, *Constantinople*, 1924.

⁶⁶ Cf. E. Altan Ergut, 'Presenting Ankara: Popular Conceptions of Architecture and History', in D. Arnold, E. Altan Ergut, B. Turan Özkaya, eds., *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 156.

⁶⁷ Mamboury, *Ankara*, p. 9. This and all other translations from non-English texts in this essay are by the author.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Cf. G. A. Sargın, 'Ötekinin Gözüyle Ankara'yı Kurmak: Sovyet Propaganda Sinemasında Devrimci Bellek Kaybı ve Anımsama', in T. Şenyapılı, ed., *Cumhuriyetin Ankarası* (Ankara: METU University Press, 2005).

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- ⁷⁰ *La Turquie Kemaliste* (from June 1935 spelled *La Turquie Kâmaliste*) was published by the General Directorate of the Press between 1934 and 1948. Most articles were in French, some in English and German.
- ⁷¹ F. Rifkî [Atay], 'Il faut venir à Ankara'. *La Turquie Kemaliste*, 1 (1934), p. 14. The author was a member of the Grand National Assembly (the parliament of the Turkish Republic) and chaired the Commission for the revision of Ankara's master plan.
- ⁷² E. Özendes, ed., *In the Light of the Republic: The Photographs of Othmar Pferschy* (Istanbul: Istanbul Modern, 2006).
- ⁷³ B. Batuman, 'Photography at Arms: "Early Republican Ankara" from Nation-Building to Politics of Nostalgia'. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 25/2 (2008), pp. 99-117.
- ⁷⁴ Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building*, p. 67.
- ⁷⁵ V. N. Tör, 'Qu'attendons-nous de l'intellectuel occidental?'. *La Turquie Kemaliste*, 11 (1935), p. 1.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ A. Reisman, *Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision* (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2006).
- ⁷⁹ N. von Bischoff, *Ankara: eine Deutung des neuen Werdens in der Türkei* (Wien/Leipzig: Adolf Holzhausens Nachfolger, 1935). The book was published in French as *La Turquie dans le monde* (Paris: Payot, 1936). All subsequent quotes have been translated from the French version.
- ⁸⁰ Bischoff, *La Turquie dans le monde*, p. 5.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 189.
- ⁸² Ibid., p. 179.
- ⁸³ Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building*, p. 80.
- ⁸⁴ Cf. Nicolai, *Moderne und Exil*, pp. 23-24.
- ⁸⁵ H. H. McWilliams, *The Diabolical. An Account of the Adventures of Five People Who Set Out in a Converted Ford Lorry to Make a Journey from Palestine to England Across Asia Minor and the Balkans* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1934). Following his journey, McWilliams wrote also an article about Ankara for the journal *Builder*: this and other reviews appeared in the architectural press during the 1930s are going to be discussed in a separate publication.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 180.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 183.
- ⁸⁸ S. Ronart, *Die Türkei von Heute* (Amsterdam: Verlag de Steenuil, 1936). Hereafter all quotes are taken from the English edition: *Turkey To-Day* (London: Robert Hale, 1938).
- ⁸⁹ Ronart's previous books on Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece appeared all in the same series: *Albanien von Heute* (1933); *Bulgarien von Heute* (1935); *Griechenland von Heute* (1935).
- ⁹⁰ Cf. M. M. Clerget, 'Stephan Ronart, La Turquie d'aujourd'hui' (book review). *Annales d'histoire sociale*, 2/2 (1940), p. 176.
- ⁹¹ Ronart, *Turkey To-Day*, p. 10.
- ⁹² Ibid., p. 210.
- ⁹³ Ibid., p. 215.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 135-6.

⁹⁵ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), p. 8. See also D. Saban Ökesli, 'Hermann Jansen's Planning Principles and His Urban Legacy in Adana'. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 26/2 (2009), pp. 45-68.

⁹⁶ Jansen came under Sitte's influence while studying at the Technical University of Aachen. See D. Saban Ökesli, 'Hermann Jansen's Planning Principles and His Urban Legacy in Adana'. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 26/2 (2009), pp. 45-68.

⁹⁷ Cf. D. Saban Ökesli, 'Hermann Jansen's Planning Principles and His Urban Legacy in Adana'. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 26/2 (2009), pp. 45-68.

⁹⁸ Ronart, *Turkey To-Day*, p. 145.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁰¹ For a critical discussion of this monument within the wider context of memorial practices in early Republican Turkey, see: G. A. Sargın, 'Displaced Memories, or the Architecture of Forgetting and Remembrance'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22 (2004), pp. 659-80.

¹⁰² Cf. B. Batuman, 'Photography at Arms: "Early Republican Ankara" from Nation-Building to Politics of Nostalgia'. *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 25/2 (2008), pp. 99-117.

¹⁰³ E. F. Üstün, ed., *Yabancı gözüyle Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi* (Ankara: Dahiliye Vekâleti, Matbuat Umum Müdürlüğü Neşriyatından, 1938).