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«Reality of the Magic of the East»: Hemingway on the Greco-Turkish War and the Refugee Procession in Eastern Thrace

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5/ «Reality of the Magic of the East»: Hemingway on the Greco-Turkish War and the Refugee Procession in Eastern Thrace *

Çiğdem OĞUZ

Ernest Hemingway came to Turkey as a war correspondent to cover the Greco-Turkish War in 1922 for the newspaper «Toronto Star Daily». In two months, he visited Istanbul, Mudanya, and Eastern Thrace. The way he depicted the region, atmosphere of war, refugees in Thrace, and ordinary people in extraordinary times has sparked debates among historians and literary critics. This article discusses how Hemingway's unfamiliar, new narration of the region created controversial interpretations. In doing so, the paper argues that Hemingway's rupture from the romantic "magical East" imagery made his work (both his dispatches and fiction) compelling and unique.

The prominent American writer Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) came to Turkey in 1922 as a war correspondent to cover the Greco-Turkish War (1921-1922) for the newspaper, «Toronto Star Daily». He arrived in the Ottoman capital, Istanbul, on September 30, 1922. He sent his first cable from Sofia on his way to Istanbul titled, «British Can Save Constantinople». He wrote fourteen articles in two months culminating with his last story on November 14, 1922, which he again sent from Sofia, titled «Refugees from Thrace»¹. Most critics agree that his experience in Turkey deeply influenced him and inspired his stories both directly and indirectly². He wrote *On the Quai*

* I have presented an earlier version of this paper in the Ninth Annual Symposium of the Research Network on the History of the Idea of Europe, *Mediterranean Europe(s): Images and Ideas of Europe from the Mediterranean Shores* in Naples, on July 4-6, 2018. In addition to the conference organizers, I would like to thank Prof. Rolf Petri for reading and commenting on the manuscript; Prof. Alberto L. Siani for his comments on the first version; and my friends Fırat Kaplan and Ayşe Nur Akdal for their help in providing me with some of the sources that I lacked.

¹ Hemingway's journalistic works can be found in this volume: WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline, Toronto: The Complete Toronto Star Dispatches 1920-1924*, New York, Scribner, 1985.

² Meyers indicates that Hemingway's experience in Turkey had an immensely important role in his career as a writer, MEYERS, Jeffrey, «Hemingway's Second War: The Greco-Turkish Conflict, 1920-1922», in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 30, 1984, pp. 24-36, p. 26. Kuyucu documents the impact of Hemingway's time in Turkey on his writings with her thesis study, KUYUCU, Neriman, *Hemingway in Turkey: The Influence of His Turkish Experiences on His Writing*, MA Thesis, University of Michigan, Michigan, 2013. I should also note that

at Smyrna and the three vignettes in *In Our Time* as a response to the Greco-Turkish war. In his *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, *Old Man at the Bridge*, *God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen*, and in the first chapter of *Death in the Afternoon*, one can find references to his time in Turkey. His war-themed stories, particularly on the military retreats and ordinary people's lives during war also carried traces of his testimonies in Istanbul and Eastern Thrace³.

The Ottoman Empire was defeated at the First World War (1914-1918) along with other Central Powers – Germany, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary – against the Entente. The Armistice of Mudros signed on October 31, 1918 only ended the war temporarily for the Ottomans. As the armistice stipulated that the Entente had the right to occupy any place if it considered its security to be under threat, soon after the occupations had begun. Greece acted with the support from Britain and occupied the region around İzmir in May 1919 and kept advancing through Western Anatolia. This event strengthened the nationalists' position vis-à-vis the Sultan's who rather maintained a pro-British opinion. The nationalist movement, led by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), organized a military and civil resistance with the convening of the national assembly in Ankara on April 23, 1920, after the occupation of the Ottoman capital by the British and the Allied forces⁴.

Hemingway, during his time in the Near East, spent his first days in Istanbul while the city was under occupation⁵. Yet, tension was in the air as the Turkish nationalist forces were advancing to the capital city to claim it back from the occupation forces after victorious offensive attacks in Anatolia against the Greek army (particularly in Smyrna/Izmir where the Turkish nationalist forces had already taken control on September 9, 1922). Hemingway then went to Mudanya in Southern Marmara to report on the Mudanya Armistice (October 3–11, 1922). According to the armistice signed between the Turkish nationalist forces and the Allies (Britain, France, and Italy), the Greek troops had to leave Eastern Thrace to the Turks and retreat to the Maritza River (*Meriç* in Turkish). Hemingway went to Muratlı, a town in Eastern Thrace, and then to Adrianople (Edirne) to report on the Greeks' retreat and the procession of refugees (both Greek and Turkish), a march that greatly impacted his writing regarding the impacts of war on civilians. He wrote on

Hemingway himself never referred to the region as Turkey or the Ottoman Empire. Rather, he used “the Near East” as a geographical term.

³ The Greco-Turkish War was Hemingway's second war. He had been to the Italian front during the First World War as an ambulance driver. For a biographical work on Hemingway, see MEYERS, Jeffrey, *Hemingway: A Biography*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1999. However, as Fenton argues, it was Hemingway's assignment in Turkey that provided him with a deep understanding of the war, FENTON, Charles A., *The Apprenticeship Of Ernest Hemingway*, New York, Farrar Straus And Young, 1954, p. 186. For example, Hemingway described the scenes of military retreat in his *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) based on his observations of Greek army's evacuation in Adrianople. *Ibidem*, p. 182.

⁴ On the post-World War I period and the Turkish Independence War, see ZURCHER, Erik J., *Turkey: A Modern History*, 4th edition, London and New York, I.B.Tauris, 2017, pp. 133-66.

⁵ Kuyucu gives a detailed account of Hemingway's stay in Turkey. See KUYUCU, Neriman, *Hemingway in Turkey*, cit., pp. 8-9.

the way back, it was already «beginning to seem unreal to him»⁶. He took a train back to Paris from Sofia and stayed in Paris for a month. Thirty years later, he recalled that time and said, «I remember coming home from the Near East [...] absolutely heartbroken at what was going on and in Paris trying to decide whether I would put my whole life into trying to do something about it or to be a writer»⁷. After Paris, he went to Lausanne to report the Lausanne Peace Conference in 1923, where he had his last connection with Turkey or the Near East as he often referred to the region.

As will be shown below, a total of fourteen dispatches and a handful references to his two months of time in Turkey (a minimal selection compared to his complete works) keep occupying the minds of historians and literary scholars. It is astonishing to see how such a small amount of work has been interpreted in so many starkly contrasting ways. In this article, my aim is to bring a new interpretation to this material by arguing that Hemingway's unfamiliar and new narration of the region made different interpreters perceive his accounts as controversial texts. Precisely this new narration and perception of the region that echo in Hemingway's account of Turkey are what make Hemingway's work from this period (both his dispatches and fiction) compelling and different, and thus, it has endured such diverse critical readings⁸. His narration marks a moment of rupture from early romantic perspectives of the nineteenth- and the early twentieth-century accounts that described a certain "magical East", a recurring theme that appears in almost every account written by foreigners visiting the Ottoman territories. After ten years of war, "the Near East" eventually surrendered to realism. As described below, Hemingway's writing style (mostly the «iceberg formulation») has particular merit for the new narration of the region that can be observed in both his dispatches and his fiction. By evaluating his dispatches and some references to the postwar scenes in his fiction, I try to offer a new insight into this great novelists' opinions about war, refugees, and the social and psychological atmosphere of the conflict. Ultimately, the scope of this article does not attend to all of Hemingway's writings, nor does it offer a comprehensive literary critique of his writing from this period.

⁶ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Refugees From Thrace* (November 14, 1922), in WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline*, Toronto, cit., pp. 249-252, p. 249.

⁷ Quoted in FENTON, Charles A., *The Apprenticeship Of Ernest Hemingway*, cit., p. 183.

⁸ While it is true that Hemingway was not the first to report the war and atrocities committed by different sides in the Ottoman context, his account was a literary/journalistic one that could reach to a wider audience also thanks to his fame. Other accounts include Leon Trotsky's, who was a reporter to the *Kievskaya Mysl* paper to cover the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) from Bulgaria in 1912. His dispatches were translated into English only in 1980. The Balkan Wars were covered by the Carnegie Endowment as well and the commission's work titled, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* is still a useful source for historians. Both of these accounts received attention during the 1990s at the time of the Yugoslav wars of disintegration, see TODOROVA, Maria, *The Balkan Wars in Memory: the Carnegie Report and Trotsky's War Correspondence*, in ID., *Scaling the Balkans: Essays on Eastern European Entanglements*, Leiden & Boston, Brill, 2019, pp. 510-537.

With just fourteen dispatches and a few stories that nevertheless left a remarkable impact on the scale of aftershocks following a big earthquake, Hemingway's responses to his time in the Near East have inspired intensely diverse interpretations. The points of departure in these interpretations can be collected under these interlocking themes: his descriptions of life at war, which side Hemingway supported in the Greco-Turkish War, his omission of the greater "context," and lastly, his treatment of people's agency in both his stories and newspaper dispatches.

1. «Dirty white, not glistening and sinister»

Hemingway's style of describing the city of Constantinople, the food, the life in the East, including the tension that was in the air in a postwar country between occupation and the nationalist independence war, constitutes one of the foremost points of departure in these interpretive debates. Why did he describe Constantinople – the city renowned for its beauty, an "exotic" land which so many had desired to unravel, the city that inspired the travelers, Orientalists, and poets all along – as «dirty white, not glistening and sinister»?

The imagery of the city that Hemingway had in his mind before his arrival was very different from the one that he encountered in person. Instead of a magical land, he found dirt, dust, wickedness, tension, and tragedy. He wrote, «Constantinople doesn't look like the movies. It does not look like the pictures, or the paintings, or anything», in a dispatch, published in the «Daily Star»⁹. He went on to describe Istanbul as follows:

From all I had ever seen in the movies Stamboul ought to have been white and glistening and sinister. Instead the houses look like Heath Robinson drawings, dry as tinder, the color of old weatherbeaten fence rails, and filled with little windows. Scattered through the town rise minarets. They look like dirty, white candles sticking up for no apparent reason.

The train passes the old, reddish Byzantine wall and goes into a culvert again. It comes out and you get flashes of squatting, mushroom-like mosques always with their dirty-white minarets rising from the corners. Everything white in Constantinople is dirty white. When you see the color a white shirt gets in twelve hours you appreciate the color a white minaret gets in four hundred years¹⁰.

⁹ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Constantinople, Dirty White, Not Glistening and Sinister* (October 18, 1922), in WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline, Toronto*, cit., pp. 227-229.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 227.

What is even more interesting and at the same time telling is that the dispatch is not only about the “dirtiness” of Constantinople in its immediate meaning. I suggest that this aesthetic distaste about the city relates to his distaste for the “dirty business” of war. As he made observations about the city, he also described the gravity in the air that was clear to him, the gravity of uncertainty about what would happen upon the entrance of Mustafa Kemal and his army to Istanbul. Hemingway anticipated «a patriotic orgy»¹¹. The Armenians, Jews, and particularly the Greeks out of the fear of retaliation for the Greek army’s atrocities in Anatolia were in panic. Taking his glasses with him to watch the harbor from a hill, he portrayed how the Greek refugees were boarding an Italian steamer:

[l]eaving their homes and businesses, all their associations and their livelihoods, because they were afraid to wait and see what would happen when the brown-faced men in fezzes, their carbines strapped on their backs, riding their shaggy, short, mountain horses should come ashore from the ferry from Scutari just across the narrow harbor¹².

Mel Kenne plants Hemingway’s description of the minarets as «Dirty White Candles» in the title of his article in which he discusses Hemingway’s distaste in terms of dealing with “otherness”¹³. Kenne proposes that Hemingway was «projecting a more personal conflict onto the larger one between the Greek and Turkish cultures», and his distaste of the city was partly due to “cultural shock”¹⁴. In Kenne’s interpretation, the phrase «dirty white candles» stands for «sexual corruption, as if Turkish society’s domination by the Islamic religion was on phallic impulses, and the minarets’ tainted whiteness expressed this degenerated form of morality»¹⁵. While it is true that the theme of “moral corruption” was frequently used by various circles with political and social implications during the period in question, I believe Hemingway had little intention to describe sexual corruption and moral decline as such¹⁶. His intention was rather to offer a realistic

¹¹ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Waiting for An Orgy (October 19, 1922)*, in WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline, Toronto*, cit., pp. 230-231.

¹² HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Constantinople, Dirty White, Not Glistening*, cit., p. 229.

¹³ KENNE, Mel, «Dirty, White Candles: Ernest Hemingway’s Encounter with the East», in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 54, 4/2012, pp. 494-504.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 497.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ For instance, in September 1919, the *Times* published an article titled «Decadent Turkey: Muslim Virtues Fast Disappearing» claiming that Constantinople was in a state of moral decadence with venereal diseases, alcohol consumption, and gambling present in the city. The article was to defy the Indian society’s Islamic solidarity that condemned the occupation of the city by the British with an emphasis that Constantinople was the «center of Islamic civilization and morality» (HEMINGWAY, Ernest, «Decadent Turkey», in *Times*, 11 September 1919, p. 9). On the discourse of moral decline and the political, social, and intellectual implications of it, see OĞUZ, Çiğdem, *The Struggle Within: “Moral Crisis” on the Ottoman Homefront During the First World War*, Ph.D. Thesis, Boğaziçi University & Leiden University, 2018.

portrait of the city, which contrasted with his expectations. His writing gave him a way to capture the moment and transfer it to the reader in line with his prose style, and generally transfer his distaste of war business to the readership.

2. «The Magic of the East»

In his article, «The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway», Charles A. Fenton writes that Hemingway's «theme was the paradox of Constantinople's contradictory qualities; the description was an exercise in authenticity, tempered by the sensitive, romantic point of view which originally allowed him to recognize the paradox».¹⁷ Rather than an aesthetic disgust toward an «other,” in my opinion, we find the extinguished illusion of “magic” in Hemingway, including the magic of the East that the romantic narrators of the nineteenth century manifested in their accounts. Hemingway's East is closer to our vision of the region today, in the sense that the gravity of reality weighs on us more than any other impression.

For Hemingway, «you have the magic of the East» at the moment «when you wake and see a mist over the Golden Horn with the minarets rising out of it slim and clean toward the sun and the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer in a voice that soars and dips like an aria from a Russian opera»¹⁸. But it lasts only minutes, and «you have the East» when you see «your face is covered with a mass of minute red speckles from the latest insect that discovered you last night»¹⁹. The magic fades to disillusionment within particular images in Istanbul. «Constan», he says, «as the old timers always call it», is as dusty, as in «the dust is so thick that a dog trotting along the road that parallels the Pera hillside kicks up a puff like a bullet striking every time his paws hit the ground. It is almost ankle-deep on a man and the wind swirls it in clouds»²⁰. When it rains, the dust turns into mud, and the streets turn into rivers. He didn't like the food either, and wrote, «my jaw muscles are beginning to bulge like a bulldog's from chewing, or chawing, Turkish meat»²¹. Although he liked the fish in Istanbul, he added, «fish is a brain food and anyone taking about three good doses of a brain food would leave Constan at once - even if he had to swim to do it»²². He found Turkish coffee «tremendously poisonous, stomach-rotting that has a greater kick than absinthe»²³. That he caught malaria during his two months in Istanbul added to all of these

¹⁷ FENTON, Charles A., *The Apprenticeship Of Ernest Hemingway*, cit., p. 176.

¹⁸ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Old Constan (October 28, 1922)*, in WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline, Toronto*, cit., p. 239.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 240.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *Ibidem*.

foul descriptions. Finally, he summarized what not the “magic” but the “reality of the magic of the East” was:

Before the sun rises in the morning you can walk through the black, smooth-worn streets of Constan and rats will scuttle out of your way, a few stray dogs nose at the garbage in the gutters, and a bar of light comes through the rack in a shutter letting out a streak of light and the sound of drunken laughing. That drunken laughing is the contrast to the muezzin's beautiful, minor, soaring, swaying call to prayer, and the black, slippery, smelly, offal-strewn streets of Constantinople in the early morning are the reality of the Magic of the East²⁴.

Before coming to the city, he had read Pierre Loti, the famous French novelist and naval officer who wrote exotic accounts of Istanbul in the second half of the nineteenth century, as he states in a dispatch. «There may be a happy medium», wrote Hemingway, «between the East of Pierre Loti's stories and the East of everyday life, but it could only be found by a man who always looked with his eyes half-shut, didn't care what he ate, and was immune to the bites of insects»²⁵.

3. Which side was Hemingway on?

Hemingway's journalistic pieces and his later fictional writings based on what he witnessed in the region divided most critics. It is so striking to see the diversity of opinions about his “side” in the Greco-Turkish War. While Peter Lecouras argues that Hemingway «observed the Greeks and Turks from a safe distance»²⁶ and he «sympathizes with the Turks, in tacit complicity with the interests of the Western-backed hegemony»²⁷, particularly about his observations on Greek refugees in Eastern Thrace, Himmet Ummunç, on the contrary, writes that Hemingway was «culturally biased [against the Turks], politically unaware of the true state of affairs, and professionally unlearned about the history of the land»²⁸. In another account on Hemingway's wartime journalism, Jeffrey Meyers asserts that Hemingway was rather «sympathetic to the cruelly victorious Turks rather than to the Greeks», while he adds that both sides committed atrocities during war²⁹. Although many scholars emphasize Hemingway's apparent lack of context with respect to both his fiction and dispatches, I believe the ordinary people, soldiers and

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 239.

²⁶ LECOURAS, Peter, «Hemingway in Constantinople», *The Midwest Quarterly*, 43, 1/2001, p. 39.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

²⁸ UMUNC, Himmet, «Hemingway in Turkey: Historical Contexts and Cultural Intertexts», in *Belleten*, 69, 2005, p. 639.

²⁹ MEYERS, Jeffrey, «Hemingway's Second War», cit., p. 26.

peasants alike, attracted his interest most. He wrote about their sufferings, rather than the broader context, a context already known by many in his time. In addition, the depiction of the animals' suffering throughout wars is another striking element in Hemingway's writing. Indeed, the depiction of the cost of war at the human and animal levels in Hemingway's narration of events makes his accounts compelling and different from those of his contemporaries. As Kim Fortuny puts it, «his coverage, like his novels of war, tends to highlight the effects of the political and military disputes on the ground, regardless of loyalty to any side», and contrary to the interpretation that Hemingway sided with the Greeks or Turks, Hemingway did not «endorse the usual Western narrative of the Turks solely as barbarian aggressors and the Greeks solely as civilized victims»³⁰. Instead, he meticulously underlined the role of Western powers in the conflict.

Hemingway's prose style in the narration of events plays an intense role in his writings. Although Hemingway later announced in an angry response that his newspaper pieces and fiction cannot be regarded as the same³¹, his journalism and fictional writing have parallels, particularly with respect to the reality and the way that it is conveyed. As demonstrated meticulously by Elizabeth Dewberry, the interplays between reality, representation, and language in Hemingway's fiction and nonfiction challenge traditional realist assumptions with respect to his construction of events³². Meyers describes this construction of reality, i.e., the omission of context as a deliberate stylistic writing strategy as he «objectively reported only the immediate event in order to achieve a concentration and intensity of focus», which was «a spotlight rather than a stage»³³. In his novel, *Death in the Afternoon*, Hemingway revealed his approach to the issue of omission in prose with this famous iceberg formulation:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing. A writer who appreciates the seriousness of writing so little that he is anxious to make people see he is formally educated, cultured or well-bred is merely a popinjay. And this too remember; a serious writer is not to be

³⁰ FORTUNY, Kim. *American writers in Istanbul: Melville, Twain, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Bowles, Algren, Baldwin, and Settle*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2009, p. 67.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 59.

³² DEWBERRY, Elizabeth, *Hemingway's Journalism and The Realist Dilemma*, in DONALDSON, Scott (edited by), *The Cambridge Companion to Hemingway*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 16-35.

³³ MEYERS, Jeffrey, «Hemingway's Second War», cit., p. 26.

confounded with a solemn writer. A serious writer may be a hawk or a buzzard or even a popinjay, but a solemn writer is always a bloody owl³⁴.

Fortuny explains this kind of treatment of facts in Hemingway in the author's dispatch on Istanbul's psychological atmosphere awaiting the entrance of the Turkish troops. Accordingly, in this dispatch, Hemingway «builds up associations that would be familiar to his Canadian audience», such as «baseball, horse races, and hospitals», to reflect the tension in the city³⁵. As Hemingway writes:

Take the tension that comes when the pitcher steps into the box before the packed stands at the first game of the world series, multiply it by the tension that comes when the barrier snaps up, the gong clangs and they're off at the King's Plate at the Woodbine [Toronto racetrack], add to it the tension in your mind when you walk the floor downstairs as you wait frightened and cold for someone you love, while a doctor and a nurse are doing something in a room above that you cannot help in any way, and you have something comparable to the feeling in Constantinople now³⁶.

Among the most remarkable and the most criticized stories due to its “dehistoricizing the war” – or, as Lecouras mentions, «[it] cries out for historical context»³⁷, that is, the historical context of the Greco-Turkish War – is *On the Quai at Smyrna*, the first story published in the 1930 Scribner's edition. Indeed, the historical background of the occupation of Western Anatolia by Greece is truly reaffirming his view of Great Powers' involvement in “war business” in every respect. Even before the First World War, Lloyd George, Churchill, and Sir John Stavridi had come to an agreement on the idea of an alliance exclusively between the two states. The East Mediterranean would be safeguarded by the Greeks for the British interests in the region in exchange for Britain's diplomatic and material support. When Lloyd George and Venizelos were taking further steps for an Anglo-Greek entente in the post-war period, Churchill as the Minister of War, and many others in the British government remained hesitant as a Greek occupation could further deteriorate stability in Turkey. In addition, Greece could not gain much support from the Allies for the occupation of Anatolia. The outbreak of a tension in the domestic policy of

³⁴ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Death in the Afternoon*, New York, Scribner, 1960, p. 192.

³⁵ FORTUNY, Kim, *American Writers in Istanbul*, cit., p. 65.

³⁶ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Waiting for an Orgy*, cit., p.230.

³⁷ LECOURAS, Peter, «Hemingway in Constantinople», cit., p. 37. As a matter of fact, the context issue for this story sparked many debates. Matthew Stewart discusses the context and the catastrophe that inspired the story, providing the larger frame that the British officer in the story speaks from. See STEWART, Matthew, «It Was All a Pleasant Business: The Historical Context of 'On the Quai at Smyrna'», in *The Hemingway Review*, 23, 1/2003, pp. 58-71.

Greece as the Royalists won over the Venizelists and the monarchy was restored in the country in 1920 by the return of King Constantine created confusion in public opinion. Eventually, the uncalculated presence of a strong Turkish resistance brought about an end to the occupation. While Hemingway covered this background in his dispatches, he brought the civilians to the forefront in his story³⁸.

Reflecting Gertrude Stein's «theories of 'simplicity'» and «the destruction of the emotion»³⁹, Hemingway narrates a moment corresponding to the time when the Turkish army entered Izmir, as the non-Muslim residents awaited aid at the shore of the Aegean Sea. Although he was not a firsthand witness of the events in Izmir, he listened to stories about the great Izmir fire that began on September 13, 1922, which destroyed the Armenian and Greek quarters. Residents fleeing from the Turkish army remained in between the Turkish forces and the fire, while a few miles away at the sea, the Allied naval forces watched the events without intervening in the situation. Izmir was a port city known for its wealth, cosmopolitan population, and intellectual progress. Not much remained after the fire and the clashes. The question of who burnt the city's Armenian and Greek quarters continues to fuel academic and popular debates. While the Turkish side claimed that it was the Greeks that did not want to leave anything from the city to the Turks and burnt it down, Greek and Armenian accounts claimed it was the Turks that wanted to make sure the residents would not come back⁴⁰.

The story is told by a British officer in the *On the Quai at Smyrna* in a disturbingly ironic way: «We were in the harbor and they were all on the pier and at midnight they started screaming. We used to turn the searchlight on them to quiet them. That always did the trick»⁴¹. The British officer narrating the story witnesses all the horror at the sea. He shares descriptions of «the women with dead babies» who did not «give them up», and when the Greeks «had all their baggage animals they couldn't take off with them so they just broke their forelegs and dumped them into the shallow water». Yet, he does nothing to help the people at the harbor, just as he was commanded. The story ends with the British officer saying, «It was all a pleasant business.

³⁸ SMITH, Michael Llewellyn, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, London, Hurst & Company Press, 1998, pp. XI-XX.

³⁹ KUYUCU, Neriman, *Hemingway in Turkey*, cit., pp. 36-37.

⁴⁰ Kolluoğlu describes the incident of the fire as a «moment of discontinuity » in the history of city, and suggests that the fire helped create a national ground for Turkish identity. See KOLLUOĞLU, Biray, «Forgetting the Smyrna Fire», in *History Workshop Journal*, 60, 2005, pp. 25-44. See also Reşat Kasaba, who draws attention to the complexity of the situation in the city during that time, without succumbing to antagonistic interpretations, KASABA, Reşat, *Izmir 1922: A Port City Unravels*, in FAWAZ, Leila Tarazi, BAYLY, Christopher Alan (edited by), *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, pp. 204-229.

⁴¹ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *On the Quai at Smyrna, The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*, New York, Scribner, 1998, p. 63.

My word yes a most pleasant business»⁴². In fact, one can clearly discern Hemingway's distaste for the politics of war and the ineptitude of the war-stirring governments that left civilians in the middle of conflict in the story. Later, he remembers a scene about the mules thrown into the water with broken legs in the first chapter of *Death in the Afternoon*, and how this traumatic story inspired his writing.

I had just come from the Near East, where the Greeks broke the legs of their baggage and transport animals and drove and shoved them off the quay into the shallow water when they abandoned the city of Smyrna, and I remember saying that I did not like the bullfights because of the poor horses. I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced. In writing for a newspaper you told what happened and, with one trick and another, you communicated the emotion aided by the element of timeliness which gives a certain emotion to any account of something that has happened on that day; but the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always, was beyond me and I was working very hard to try to get it. The only place where you could see life and death, i.e., violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bull ring and I wanted very much to go to Spain where I could study it. I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death⁴³.

Kuyucu asserts that the refugees of the war «were no different from those animals» that Hemingway narrated.

Turkey forced them to evacuate the place they had called “home”, the Allies withdrew their promised support, the Bulgarian frontier was shut against them, and their future was nothing but obscure. They were being treated like baggage animals dumped in shallow water after their forelegs were broken by their own government. Those who witnessed this tragedy including Hemingway hid behind the control of their emotion and irony in order not to have a break down⁴⁴.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 64.

⁴³ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Death in the Afternoon*, cit., p. 2.

⁴⁴ KUYUCU, Neriman, *Hemingway in Turkey*, cit., p. 41.

4. «Ghastly, Shambling» The Refugee March In Thrace

Hemingway witnessed the refugee procession of the Greek population in Thrace in November of 1922. He also witnessed a «thin counter-stream» of the Turks leaving Western Thrace. His way of describing the march in dispatches as well as in his later fiction is worth consideration with respect to his approach to the “moment” and the context surrounding it. A reader today - almost a century later - can clearly envision the setting of the march while reading his pieces, thanks to his vivid portrayal of the scene.

It is a silent procession. Nobody even grunts. It is all they can do to keep moving. Their brilliant peasant costumes are soaked and draggled. Chickens dangle by their feet from the carts. Calves nuzzle at the draught cattle wherever a jam halts the stream. An old man marches under a young pig, a scythe and a gun, with a chicken tied to his scythe. A husband spreads a blanket over a woman in labor in one of the carts to keep off the driving rain. She is the only person making a sound. Her little daughter looks at her in horror and begins to cry. And the procession keeps moving⁴⁵.

Just like his impression of Istanbul, his distaste for the city of Edirne is clear in this setting of refugee evacuation. «Adrianople itself is not a pleasant place. Dropping off the train at 11 o'clock at night, I found the station a mud hole crowded with soldiers, bundles, bedsprings, bedding, sewing machines, babies, broken carts, all in the mud and the drizzling rain»⁴⁶. The room he stayed in at Madame Marie's hotel, the only one in town was crawling with lice to an extent that «the cots were alive with them»⁴⁷. Sleeping on the cot given to him by the two moving picture operators who came to the hotel that night, he suffered from mosquito bites and the resulting fever of his «Constantinople-acquired malaria». In his fictional vignette, «Chapter II», he recalls the refugee procession in almost a journalistic fashion, describing the scene as he saw it.

Minarets stuck up in the rain out of Adrianople across the mud flats. The carts were jammed for thirty miles along the Karagatch road. Water buffalo and cattle were hauling carts through the mud. No end and no beginning. Just carts loaded with everything they owned. The old men and women, soaked through, walked along keeping the cattle moving. The Maritza was running yellow almost up to the bridge. Carts were jammed solid on the bridge with camels bobbing along through them. Greek cavalry herded along the procession. Women and kids

⁴⁵ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *A Silent, Ghastly Procession* (October 20, 1922), in WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline*, Toronto, cit., p. 232.

⁴⁶ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Refugees From Thrace* (November 14, 1922), cit., p. 249.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 250.

were in the carts crouched with mattresses, mirrors, sewing machines, bundles. There was a woman having a kid with a young girl holding a blanket over her and crying. Scared sick looking at it. It rained all through the evacuation⁴⁸.

His treatment of the agency of the ordinary people, whether Greeks or Turks, carries a perspective that sees the victim's side of the story. In the refugee procession, he saw a Greek soldier beating a Turkish peasant who was among those evacuating Western Thrace and depicted the scene as meticulously as he had depicted the Greek peasants suffering on the road⁴⁹. He wrote on the Greek retreat: «Might-have-beens are a sad business and the end of Greek military power is sad enough as it is, but there is no blame for it to be given to the Greek common soldier. Even in the evacuation the Greek soldiers looked like good troops»⁵⁰. But it was the betrayal of foreign powers and the incapacity of their governments that led them to the failure. Such a treatment of the people's agency, separating the "governments" and "people" without national prejudices, was not unusual to his time but unusual to the readership today that expects to see a clearly chosen side in a first-hand account. Hemingway was an intellectual of his time, a member of an intellectual and literary circle that had strong feelings for international solidarity against the imperialist war, anti-militarism and anti-nationalism yet as Stephens puts, he had a «paradoxical notion that wars are fought by the best people for the worst of reasons»⁵¹. However, it should also be noted that Hemingway's attribution of "agency" to the civilians that he illustrated in his works is far from being a self-centered agency, which historians today would problematize. The conception of "innocent victims of war" in Hemingway is not about the subject as an active participant in the events, but rather, they were passively engaged in the events that they found themselves in the middle of, and as such, they appear like fireflies flashing from time to time. In Hemingway's dispatch from Edirne he relates a talk that he had with the owner of the hotel, Madame Marie, when he asked her who was the best among the sides fighting for Eastern Thrace⁵². Madame Marie says they are «all the same», as «they all pay» her. Hemingway answers in a rather surprised way: «But the poor people who are out there in the road», and continues that he «had seen some dreadful things that day». Madame Marie answers him with these words: «It is always that way with the people. *Toujours la même chose*. The Turk has a proverb, you know. He has many good proverbs. 'It is not only the fault of the axe but of the tree as well.' That is his

⁴⁸ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Chapter II, The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*, New York, Scribner, 1998, p. 70.

⁴⁹ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Refugees From Thrace*, cit.

⁵⁰ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *The Greek Revolt (November 3, 1922)*, in WHITE, William (edited by), *Dateline, Toronto*, cit., p. 244.

⁵¹ STEPHENS, Robert O., *Hemingway's Nonfiction: The Public Voice*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1968, p. 85

⁵² HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *Refugees From Thrace (November 14, 1922)*, cit.

proverb»⁵³. The conversation finishes with Hemingway's response, «That is his proverb all right», which leaves an impact on the reader that a “but” would follow afterwards. The retort embodies classic Hemingway style⁵⁴. Though not convinced by the axe and wood encapsulation, he omits commentary. However, that he seems to be uneasy with this encapsulation gives us a hint about Hemingway's idea of people's role in somewhat disproportionate magnitude of tragedy.

Harry, a lost writer suffering from gangrene in his deathbed in Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* keeps having flashbacks taking him back to his experiences in Turkey. The story was written in 1936, after many years had passed since Hemingway's time in the region. Harry got married to a rich woman and he regrets that he never wrote those stories (from Turkey, Paris, and the Black Forest) that he had kept to himself. Harry rambles on, «Now in his mind he saw a railway station at Karagatch and he was standing with his pack and that was the headlight of the Simplon-Orient cutting the dark now and he was leaving Thrace then after the retreat. That was one of the things he had saved to write»⁵⁵, adding that he would write the Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1923 and the humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen's involvement.

[a]nd with, in the morning at breakfast, looking out the window and seeing snow on the mountains in Bulgaria and Nansen's Secretary asking the old man if it were snow and the old man looking at it and saying, No, that's not snow. It's too early for snow. And the Secretary repeating to the other girls, No, you see. It's not snow and them all saying, It's not snow we were mistaken. But it was the snow all right and he sent them on into it when he evolved exchange of populations. And it was snow they tramped along in until they died that winter⁵⁶.

He goes on with the Greek army's defeat in Anatolia, as if he had witnessed it. This is the story that Hemingway heard from British officers that the Greek artillery had mistakenly killed their own soldiers under the command of newly arrived, incompetent, top-down appointed King Constantine officers⁵⁷. Reminding himself of the “duty to write” all of these, but he says this in vain, as Harry is dying now. He says, «There was so much to write. He had seen the world change; not just the events; although he had seen many of them and had watched the people, but he had seen the subtler change and he could remember how the people were at different times»⁵⁸. Even though he said that after coming back from the Near East either he would do something about

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 252.

⁵⁴ FORTUNY, Kim, *American writers in Istanbul*, cit., p. 77.

⁵⁵ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro, The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The Finca Vigia Edition*, New York, Scribner, 1998, p. 42.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷ He covered this issue also in a dispatch, see HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *The Greek Revolt*, cit., pp. 244-245.

⁵⁸ HEMINGWAY, Ernest, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, cit., p. 49.

what he had seen or be a writer, and he indeed gave place to what he had seen in the region in his fiction, he felt short of addressing those adequately. Perhaps, only as dying writer, he could recall those moments in a rush to convey them to the readers.

5. Conclusion

Hemingway's accounts of the Greco-Turkish War and the refugees in Thrace mark a moment of rupture in the narration of a so-called "magical East". Both in his dispatches and fictions, he conveyed a different impression of the East to his readers. His writing was not only different in the sense that he did not describe his experiences in a romantic fashion, but also because his sparse treatment of the context and his insertion of ordinary people into the scene are important elements worth consideration for home front historians who consider the civilian element central to the war. In this article, rather than approaching Hemingway's description of his surroundings in Istanbul and Thrace as the scratches of a biased American author, I've attempted to demonstrate how his human interest in the big picture interplays with his prose style. He thus succeeds in capturing a diverse angle of war, as he simultaneously deconstructs the "magical East". On the whole, this constitutes one of the examples of this new tendency in the narration of the region. When considered together, Hemingway's political position had a consistent nature in itself: A dislike of politicians, a strong individualism that rejects all kinds of control over him, and the sympathy for the revolutionary left⁵⁹. The Greco-Turkish War had an impact on the shaping of the former and that reflected on his writings, both fiction and nonfiction, on the Near East.

⁵⁹ KINNAMON, Kenneth, *Hemingway and Politics*, in DONALDSON, Scott (edited by), *The Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 157-168.

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