

Among Women of Bygone Times (1958)

Nahid Sırrı Örik (1895 – 1960)

OVERVIEW

In this work, Nahid Sırrı Örik reconstructs the stories of the women in his family from what he heard from those same women. The first is Sabure Hanım, the mother of Ahmet Nâfiz Bey, who is the father of Örik's father, Hasan Sırrı Bey. She is followed by Naime Hanım, Sabure Hanım's co-wife. The family narrative then expands with Ahmet Nâfiz Bey's marriage to Hasibe Hanım. Their son, Hasan Sırrı Bey, is born, and his marriage to Melek Meliha Hanım leads, in turn, to the birth of Nahid Sırrı Örik. Although it is a family history, the work also offers a portrait of the domestic lives of Ottoman bureaucratic families through the experiences of women, tracing their lives from early marriage to motherhood and eventually to becoming mothers-in-law.

PEOPLE

Sabure Hanım	Nahid Sırrı Örik's paternal great-grandmother
Mehmet Sabit Bey	Sabure Hanım's first husband
Ahmet Nâfiz Bey	Son of Sabure Hanım and Mehmet Sabit Bey
Hacı Salih Ağa	Sabure Hanım's second husband
Naime Hanım	The formerly enslaved woman whom Hacı Salih Ağa marries
Hasibe Hanım	Wife of Ahmet Nâfiz Bey
Hasan Sırrı Bey	Son of Ahmet Nâfiz Bey and Hasibe Hanım
Fehime Hanım	The second woman married by Ahmet Nâfiz Bey
Ayşe Sıdika Hanım	Hasibe Hanım's co-mother-in-law
Melek Meliha Hanım	Wife of Hasan Sırrı Bey
Ayşe Nihal	Daughter of Hasan Sırrı Bey and Melek Meliha Hanım

SYNOPSIS

Nahid Sırrı Örik begins his narrative with the story of Sabure Hanım, a Circassian girl who is abducted from the Caucasus as a child and brought to Istanbul to be sold into slavery. Raised in the household of a female slave trader, Sabure Hanım recounts the abolition of the Janissary Corps, the reforms of Mahmud II, and stories circulating about the imperial court from her own perspective. After she is purchased by Hacı Kâmilî Pasha, she is given the name Cezbinur. When the pasha's wife marries her to the pasha's secretary, Mehmet Sabit Bey, she receives the name Sabure. Their son, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey, later becomes the grandfather of Nahid Sırrı Örik on his father's side. Widowed at a young age, Sabure Hanım marries Hacı Salih Ağa. The marriage is an unhappy one, and she spends the rest of it sharing the household with her co-wife, Naime Hanım. As Ahmet Nâfiz grows up, marries Hasibe Hanım, and starts a family of his own, the focus of the narrative shifts to the second generation. Because of Ahmet Nâfiz Bey's bureaucratic appointments, the family lives in a succession of cities, including Bursa, İzmir, Çanakkale, Lesbos, Ruse, Erzurum, and Muş. Throughout these years, the emotional lives of the women, especially Hasibe Hanım, are shaped above all by Ahmet Nâfiz Bey's repeated infidelity. His second marriage during his appointment in Muş creates a major crisis within the family and gradually transforms the relationship between Hasibe Hanım and her mother-in-law, Sabure Hanım. The narrative moves to the third generation with Hasan Sırrı Bey, the son of Ahmet Nâfiz Bey and Hasibe Hanım. His marriage to Melek Meliha Hanım begins to reshape the family's established way of life, making tensions between the generations increasingly visible. The story concludes with the birth of Nahid Sırrı Örik in 1895. Throughout the narrative, events such as the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, migration, bureaucratic reassignments, and economic hardship are shown through their effects on the everyday life of a single family.

EVENTS

Sabure Hanım

Sabure Hanım is the mother of Ahmet Nâfiz Pasha, the father of Hasan Sırrı Bey, who is the father of Nahid Sırrı Örik. In other words, she is Nahid Sırrı Örik's paternal great-grandmother. Although she is a Circassian woman, no one knows where in the Caucasus she is born. Around 1912, she claims to be in her seventies, even though her son Ahmet Nâfiz Pasha is born in 1837. She also remembers the reign of Sultan Mahmud II very well, which suggests that she lives an exceptionally long life.

Although she has siblings, she cannot remember any of their names. She only remembers that her mother's name is Hawa and her father's name is Süleyman. At a young age, slave traders abduct her and bring her to Istanbul, where they place her in the house of a female slave dealer. The woman is the sister of a former grand vizier. She buys young girls whom she believes will become beautiful, raises them, and later sells them to elite households.

Most of Sabure Hanım's childhood memories belong to this house. One day, two women the slave dealer knows arrive at the door with their female servants. As soon as the door opens, they rush inside. They explain that while walking along a quiet road, four Janissaries stop them. Unable to resist, they are carried away on the men's backs. But one of the servants suddenly says, "Our gentleman uncles are taking us for a walk!" The Janissaries immediately let all four women go, offended at being called "gentleman uncles" and treated as if they are old men fit only to take women on outings.

In 1826, when the Janissary corps is abolished, Sabure Hanım watches the Janissary barracks burn for days from the windows of the slave dealer's house. Later that autumn, she sees a Janissary disguised as a religious scholar suddenly captured by soldiers in the street. They cut off his head with their swords before her eyes. She cannot bear the sight of the severed head rolling on the ground while crying, "What have I done?" She falls ill and stays in bed for several days.

After the Janissaries disappear, Sultan Mahmud becomes much more Westernized. One day, the slave dealer returns from the Friday procession and complains that the sultan has "uncovered his face." Since Ottoman sultans never actually veil their faces, Nahid Sırrı Örik notes that she is probably referring to the sultan replacing his large turban with a fez. Because Sultan Mahmud has a reputation as a womanizer, some women line up along the roads where he passes, and he strokes his beard while looking at them. There are also rumors that he spends nights in Greek homes and even in fishermen's huts.

Another figure Sabure Hanım often mentions is Esma Sultan, Sultan Mahmud's sister. According to her, Esma Sultan has Sultan Mustafa IV strangled and then lives alone for many years until her death during the reign of her nephew Abdülmecid. During Mahmud's reign, she sends her men to coffeehouses where young men from the provinces gather. The most handsome are brought to her palace, waterfront mansion, or pavilion. After amusing herself with them, she hands them over to her servants to be put to work and, if necessary, has them poisoned.

After spending some time in the slave dealer's house, Sabure Hanım is purchased by a vizier named Hacı Kâmilî Pasha. At that time, however, her name is not yet Sabure. In the vizier's household she is given the name Cezbinur. She remembers very little about those years. Because she is beautiful, some people believe that if she becomes pregnant after becoming the pasha's concubine, he will marry her. To prevent this, the pasha's wife secretly arranges her marriage to one of the pasha's clerks, a young man named Mehmet Sabit Bey.

Mehmet Sabit Bey is the father of Ahmet Nâfiz Pasha, Nahid Sırrı Örik's grandfather. He is thirty-one years old when they marry. After the marriage, he gives Cezbinur the name Sabure. He leaves the pasha's service and moves to Bursa for another government post. Since women are not usually taught to write because they might use it to send letters to lovers, he teaches Sabure Hanım only how to read. Later, while traveling to Manisa, he contracts an illness and dies within a few days at the age of thirty-three.

Based on a letter Mehmet Sabit Bey sends to Sabure Hanım from a distant posting, Nahid Sırrı Örik thinks she may be living with either her mother-in-law, her sister-in-law, or another woman, although he cannot determine who that woman is.

Although Sabure Hanım inherits considerable wealth and has no financial need to remarry, people around her encourage her to do so. One of her suitors is Hacı Salih Agha, a handsome and wealthy man who is twenty years older than she is. Apart from his concubine Naime Hanım, he has no family. Sabure Hanım agrees to marry him. Yet because Salih Agha does not want to send Naime Hanım back to the slave market, he frees her and formally marries her the day after his marriage to Sabure Hanım. Sabure Hanım never forgets this. Throughout her life, Mehmet Sabit Bey is the only husband she remembers with affection.

Salih Agha spends one night with Sabure Hanım and the next with Naime Hanım. After dinner, he sits with Sabure Hanım in the room where she sleeps. Once the servants prepare her bed, they continue their conversation there. Sometimes she falls asleep as soon as she gets into bed. When that happens, Naime Hanım and Salih Agha quietly leave the room together.

The Bride

Salih Agha treats Ahmet Nâfiz, Sabure Hanım's son from her marriage to Mehmet Sabit Bey, very well. When Ahmet Nâfiz is fifteen, he helps him enter government service. He gives him generous pocket money and spoils him. In return, the young man spends many nights away from home and sometimes comes back drunk in the morning. He calls Naime Hanım "aunt," yet he is closer to her than to his own mother. Hoping to change his behavior, Naime Hanım suggests that he get married. He agrees, on the condition that the bride have blue eyes, fair skin, rosy cheeks, long hair, and be able to read and write.

About three weeks later, they visit the family of the young woman they have chosen, Hasibe Hanım, to ask for her hand in marriage. That day, Hasibe Hanım sees Sabure Hanım and Naime Hanım sitting side by side. Sabure Hanım is of medium height, with a full figure, black hair, dark hazel eyes, fair skin, and rosy cheeks. She wears a beautiful emerald and diamond ring on the fingers of her right hand, but the earrings she wears look remarkably cheap. Naime Hanım's face is smooth and shining from facial waxing. Her eyebrows are darkened with *rastık*, a traditional eyebrow dye and her eyes are lined with kohl. Although she wears no precious jewels like emeralds or diamonds, everything on her ears and fingers is tasteful.

Hasibe Hanım's family agrees to the marriage that day. During the wedding preparations, however, an earthquake strikes Bursa. The families move to another part of the city, and the wedding takes place there.

Hasibe Saliha Hanım

Hasibe Saliha Hanım, the mother of Nahid Sırrı Örik's father, is usually known as Hasibe. She is born in 1839 and is originally Georgian. Her mother, Hafize Hanım, is married to a man named Ali Agha, but he dies. Before his death, he asks his wife to marry his own brother. Following his wish, Hafize Hanım marries Rıdvan Agha and moves from İstanbul to Çürüksu. She gives birth to two sons, Hüseyin Rüştü and Ali, and a daughter, Hasibe.

When Rıdvan Agha dies at around the age of forty, Hafize Hanım takes refuge with her sisters-in-law, Sünnî and Zeynep, but they cannot live together peacefully. She is eventually forced to marry a man named Bekir Agha from Kelkit. She takes her two sons with her but leaves her daughter, Hasibe, in the care of her childless aunt, Edayi Hanım.

Edayi Hanım is abducted from the Caucasus and sold into slavery when she is five years old. She later becomes one of the four wives of Hacı Hakkı Pasha, the governor of Ahıska, in whose harem she lives. After Hacı Hakkı Pasha dies, the four women continue living together with Edhem, the eldest son's son, in their large house in Süleymaniye. When Hasibe turns six, they enroll her in the neighborhood school. She spends much of her time in the room of Edhem Bey, who is bedridden. When Edhem Bey is thirteen or fourteen, he is married to the daughter of a prominent family from Sivas. After falling ill, however, his wife returns to Sivas, and he dies in his early thirties. After his death, the four women decide that Bursa is less expensive than İstanbul, and they move there with Hasibe.

In Bursa, they buy a house and several shops. At the local school, a boy violently pulls Hasibe's braid, so they withdraw her from school. Instead, they hire a private tutor to teach her at home. She

continues learning to read and write and is also trained to memorize the Qur'an. When she reaches marriageable age, suitors begin to appear.

The Unattractive Bride

Nahid Sırrı Örik writes that Hasibe Hanım meets every condition his grandfather has set for a wife, except that she is not beautiful. She has fair skin, beautiful eyes, and lovely hair, but she is short, bow-legged, with a torso that is long compared to her legs. She also has a large mouth, a prominent nose, and several skin tags on her face. Since, in those days, a groom usually sees his bride for the first time on the wedding day, Nahid Sırrı Örik believes that his grandfather has no choice but to accept the marriage.

Four Elderly Women

When the four elderly women arrange Hasibe's marriage, they transfer ownership of two of their shops to her. They then travel to Istanbul, hoping to secure a state pension for themselves. When they arrive at the mansion of Grand Vizier Koca Mustafa Reşid Pasha in Boyacıköy, they are admitted but are kept waiting for hours. Eventually, they lose patience and leave. As they walk out, they tell the female attendants and servants looking down on them that one day they, too, will find themselves in the same situation. Although they fail to obtain a pension, they return to Bursa from Istanbul with gifts for their in-laws.

Soon afterward, Mustafa Reşid Pasha dies. Not long later, his son, Damat Ali Galip Pasha, drowns in the Bosphorus one night. Unable to bear this second tragedy, Ali Galip Pasha's widowed mother loses her sanity.

A Child

Nine months and ten days after the marriage of Hasibe Hanım and Ahmet Nâfiz, their first child is born. They name him Ali Penahi. When the baby is six months old, however, he suddenly develops a fever and dies. Less than a year later, they have another son. Although he is born shortly after the death of Ahmet Nâfiz's stepfather, Hacı Salih Agha, Ahmet Nâfiz names the baby after his own father, Mehmet Sabit. This child also dies. Hasibe Hanım becomes pregnant once again. Before leaving Bursa on official duty, Ahmet Nâfiz says that if the baby is a boy, he wants him to be named Hasan. If it is a girl, the family may choose any name they wish. The child is born in 1861, the year Sultan Abdülaziz succeeds Sultan Abdülmecid. They name him Hasan. When Bahaettin Efendi, the Mevlevi sheikh of Bursa, hears the news, he asks that the name Sırrı be added. From then on, the boy is known as Hasan Sırrı.

Ali Efendi

One day, Hasibe Hanım's brother Ali Efendi unexpectedly arrives from Kelkit. Ahmet Nâfiz refuses to let him enter the *haremlık*, the women's quarters because he does not believe he is really Hasibe Hanım's brother. He even suspects that the man is her lover. Only after making inquiries and confirming their relationship does he allow them to meet.

Government Service and Trade

Ahmet Nâfiz also engages in trade, investing the money he inherits from his stepfather Hacı Salih Agha in buying and selling goods. At one point, he has a large quantity of timber gathered and stacked in an open field. Around this time, Ahmet Vefik Pasha, who has not yet received the title of pasha, arrives in Bursa as an inspector. When he learns that the timber belongs to Ahmet Nâfiz, he strongly disapproves of a government official engaging in commerce. Shortly afterward, the timber is destroyed in a fire.

As a result, Ahmet Nâfiz falls deeply into debt. He is forced to sell the jewelry belonging to the women in the household. Eventually, he goes to Istanbul and asks Âli Pasha for help. With Âli Pasha's support, he is appointed president of the Commercial Court in İzmir. He knows Arabic, Persian, and Greek, and has studied mathematics and accounting. From 1863 to 1879, the family lives in various cities across Anatolia and Rumelia.

In İzmir

The family lives in İzmir for five years, until 1868. The city's hot summers, mild winters, large non-Muslim population, and fashions shaped directly by clothing arriving from Europe all leave their mark on the household.

After discovering İzmir's entertainment venues, Ahmet Nâfiz begins coming home late at night. When he returns, he also starts pursuing the female servants. As a result, Hasibe Hanım stays awake every night until he comes home.

Ever since Naime Hanım begins wearing a corset, she even sleeps in it. The family eats from a *sini*, a large round serving tray placed on the floor, but she can no longer sit comfortably on the floor while wearing a corset. Instead, she grows accustomed to eating at a table with a knife and fork. Sabure Hanım, however, continues eating with her hands, so her meals are sent to her room on a *sini*. During the first years of her marriage, Sabure Hanım has treated Hasibe Hanım harshly, for example, by making her wash laundry until her hands are badly worn. Hasibe Hanım eventually takes her revenge. Using the fact that Sabure Hanım eats with her hands as an excuse, she bars her from the dining room and no longer allows her to join guests at meals.

It is in İzmir that Hasan Sırrı learns to read and write. He is a short, thin, and unattractive child. Whenever people remark on how handsome his deceased brothers had been, he defends himself by saying things like, "They may have been handsome, but they were foolish, they died. I may be ugly, but I'm clever, and I stay alive!"

Gossip in İzmir

One Ramadan, the women visit the wife of Kabuli Paşa, the governor of İzmir. They are kept waiting for quite some time. When the lady of the house finally appears, she explains that she has been reading the Qur'an and then performing voluntary prayers, and that the servants therefore could not inform her that visitors had arrived. Hasibe Hanım, however, catches a glimpse through the half-open door and sees something entirely different. The governor's wife is sitting in a rocking chair by an open window, leisurely sipping a frothy sherbet of different colors. She keeps her guests waiting because she does not want to interrupt her own pleasure.

Kabuli Paşa also owns two famous parrots. One speaks Turkish and the other French. According to local gossip, the French-speaking parrot spends the whole day silently observing everything that happens in the house and, in the evening, reports it all to Kabuli Paşa. Kabuli Paşa's mother-in-law dislikes the bird intensely and always speaks of it with resentment.

In Çanakkale

When Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is appointed chief secretary (*mektupçu*) of the Province of the Archipelago, the family leaves İzmir for Çanakkale, the provincial capital during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz. Because the governor, Kayserili Ahmet Paşa, has limited literacy, he takes Ahmet Nâfiz with him on all his inspection tours. When they travel to Cyprus, Hasibe Hanım is distressed, imagining how attracted her husband will be to the women there. A year later, however, Kayserili Ahmet Paşa is promoted, and Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is appointed *mutasarrıf* (district governor) of the Sanjak of Lesbos.

On Lesbos

Ahmet Nâfiz Bey earns a salary that is unusually high for a government official. Together with the rent from several shops and a large house that remain unsold in Bursa, he enjoys a considerable income. Yet whenever the women in the household ask him for money, he becomes irritable. He is so careless with his finances that he never notices when Hasibe Hanım secretly takes money from his pocket.

As the wife of a high-ranking official, Hasibe Hanım often receives visits from local Greek women who are curious about her. Wanting not to appear inferior to them, she begins paying even greater attention to her appearance and wears her jewelry more carefully than ever.

Ahmet Nâfiz Bey becomes so absorbed in the entertainments of Lesbos that he falls ill repeatedly. He therefore requests a transfer and is eventually appointed deputy governor of Aleppo. Burdened with debts, he sells the women's jewelry before the family leaves Lesbos.

Back in İzmir

When the family arrives in Istanbul, the appointment is canceled. By then, Âli Paşa has also died, and Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is appointed chief secretary (*mektupçu*) of the Province of Aydın instead. He thus accepts a position of lower rank and lower pay. The family returns to İzmir for a second time. After Âli Paşa's death, however, government appointments become short-lived. Just a few months later, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is appointed chief secretary (*mektupçu*) of the Province of the Danube.

Ruse

When the family arrives in Ruse, the provincial capital, they feel they are in a place that bears far more visible traces of Turkish and Islamic culture than Lesbos. They rent a house overlooking the Danube. Aziz Pasha, the governor of the Sanjak of Vidin, invites Sabure Hanım to his home because one of his wives is a woman whom Hacı Kâmilî Pasha, Sabure Hanım's former master, had once purchased as a slave and later freed. Sabure Hanım travels to Vidin and stays there as a guest for a month. Meanwhile, at the governor's request, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is sent to Bucharest to deal with a number of delicate administrative matters, where he is treated with a status equivalent to that of a minister.

When Ahmet Rasim Pasha is appointed governor after serving in Ioannina, however, he brings his own chief secretary with him, leaving Ahmet Nâfiz Bey without a position. Since it is already winter and the family has stocked up on firewood and coal, they decide to remain until spring. As Rasim Pasha gets to know Ahmet Nâfiz Bey, he regrets bringing his own secretary and tries to arrange another post for him, but Ahmet Nâfiz Bey refuses. In the spring of 1872, the family returns to Istanbul.

Istanbul –Erzurum

While staying as guests at the mansion of Ağâ Efendi, the judge of the army from Bursa, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey searches for a new position at the Sublime Porte. He is not appointed president of the Court of Appeal in Erzurum until autumn. His salary is 5,570 kurush, barely half of what he had earned in Lesbos, where his salary exceeds 10,000 kurush. Because storms begin on the Black Sea in autumn, he persuades his family to remain in Istanbul until spring and travels to Erzurum alone. Unlike when he leaves for Cyprus or Bucharest, Hasibe Hanım feels no anxiety this time, believing that her husband will have little opportunity to pursue women in Erzurum. During this period, their son Hasan Sırrı begins attending the Bayezit Secondary School.

When Ahmet Nâfiz Bey arrives in Erzurum, he discovers that the acting provincial governor has already assumed the position to which he has been appointed, leaving him once again without a post. Seeing his situation, the governor appoints him governor of the Sanjak of Muş with a salary of 6,770 kurush.

At the end of winter, although Hasan Sırrı's examinations are about to begin, Hasibe Hanım decides to join her husband in Erzurum. She senses from his letters that he is hiding something from her, and no one can persuade her to change her mind. Taking their two female servants with them, they cross the Black Sea by ship, spend a night at an inn in Trabzon, then travel on horseback, first stopping in Kelkit to visit Hasibe Hanım's brother Hüseyin Rüştü, and finally reaching Erzurum. After a short stay there, they continue toward Muş.

The Past Repeats Itself

Two hours before they reach Muş, a group of mounted gendarmes rides out to greet them. There, Ahmet Agha, who has married Hasan Sırrı's nurse and been appointed district governor, delivers a letter from Ahmet Nâfiz Bey to Sabure Hanım. After reading it, Sabure Hanım mounts her horse and rides ahead alone with Ahmet Agha for about an hour. She then stops, calls Hasibe Hanım to her side, and tells her what the letter says. Ahmet Nâfiz Bey has married for a second time.

Hasibe Hanım keeps her back perfectly straight throughout the rest of the journey, but when they finally reach the house, her veil is soaked with tears. Sabure Hanım scolds the second wife and drives her away from the family.

While Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is living alone in Muş, one of the two brothers of his late father, Mehmet Sabit Bey, who lives in the town of Oltu, visits him with his handsome son, Said. He tells Ahmet Nâfiz Bey that Said has a sister who is just as beautiful as he is and offers her hand in marriage. Ahmet Nâfiz Bey accepts. On the wedding day, however, he discovers that the woman he marries, Fehime Hanım, is tall and dark-haired but is not nearly as beautiful as her brother. He realizes that he has been deceived. She is also illiterate and speaks very poor Turkish.

Although Hasibe Hanım suffers in silence during the journey, she feels relieved when she sees how unattractive and uneducated her rival is. One day, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey sends her a letter through Fehime Hanım. As soon as Hasibe Hanım realizes that Fehime Hanım cannot read or write, she understands why he has chosen her as the messenger. In the letter, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey proposes an arrangement much like the one his stepfather, Hacı Salih Agha, once had with Sabure Hanım: he wishes to spend

one night with Hasibe Hanım and the next with Fehime Hanım. Hasibe Hanım sends her reply back with Fehime Hanım. She refuses the proposal and demands that he spend two nights with her for every one night with his second wife. He agrees. Even on the nights he spends with Fehime Hanım, however, he does not remain there until morning but returns to Hasibe Hanım's bed.

Fehime Hanım often cries to Hasan Sırrı's nurse because Ahmet Nâfiz Bey dislikes her ignorance and coarse speech so much that he spends almost no time with her. Sometimes he wakes in the middle of the night wanting to write poetry. Hasibe Hanım immediately lights a candle, brings him his pen, inkpot, and paper, and occasionally even tells him what she thinks of the poem.

Missing her mother deeply, Hasibe Hanım asks for Hafize Hanım to be brought from Kelkit. Yet after living in a village for thirty years, Hafize Hanım has become thoroughly rural in her manners. Although Hasibe Hanım loves her, she also looks down on her. She never speaks to her mother's husband of thirty years, Bekir Agha, nor does she ever allow him to enter the *haremlık*, the women's quarters. He is so offended by this that, while they are traveling from Muş to Erzurum, he rides his horse alongside Hasibe Hanım's and tells her how hurt he is that she has never once kissed his hand.

Hasibe Hanım's elder brother, Hüseyin Rüştü Efendi, also stays with the family for a time together with his sons. A woman from a district near Erzurum sends word to Sabure Hanım, claiming to be her uncle's daughter, but Sabure Hanım refuses to meet her. Many of the women in Muş are infested with lice. They constantly scratch themselves, catch the lice crawling on their bodies, crush them between their fingers, and casually throw them onto the floor. Unfortunately, Hafize Hanım behaves in exactly the same way.

Nahid Sırrı Örik notes that when he is still a child, Hüseyin Rüştü Efendi's second wife, Şükriye Hanım, visits them with her children before leaving for the pilgrimage to Mecca. Before she departs, the family secretly takes her to the bathhouse and burns her lice-infested fez without telling her.

Before the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78

As it gradually becomes clear that war is approaching, Britain sends a consul to Muş. The consul soon becomes friends with Ahmet Nâfiz Bey. Through this friendship, Hasan Sırrı begins taking English lessons from the elderly consul.

Realizing that the state's authority in Muş is weakening, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey invites all the influential local men to his residence. In the middle of the banquet, he has them all arrested by the gendarmes, whom he has secretly summoned in advance. The detainees are removed from the district, but through their political connections and persistent efforts, they eventually succeed in having Ahmet Nâfiz Bey dismissed from his post.

Farewell to Fehime Hanım

Before the family leaves for Erzurum, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey sends for Fehime Hanım's uncle, but her cousin Said comes in his place. Ahmet Nâfiz Bey leaves Fehime Hanım with Said and departs for Erzurum with his family. He later divorces her in absentia.

Years afterward, Fehime Hanım sends him a letter from Sivas, written on her behalf by someone else, asking for his help in enrolling Said's grandson at Galatasaray High School. Because she does not include her address, however, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey cannot locate her. Although the local authorities in Sivas are informed, they are unable to find where the family is living, and he is therefore unable to help.

During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78

Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is appointed president of the Central Court of First Instance in Erzurum with a salary of 5,000 kurush. When war breaks out, however, people begin fleeing to the north and south. The family takes refuge in Kelkit as guests in the home of Hüseyin Rüştü Bey. They later move on to Erzincan, where Hasan Sırrı enrolls in the military high school. At home, the women spend their days knitting socks and other necessities for the soldiers.

By this time, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey bears the title of pasha and is given a rank equivalent to that of a general in Erzincan. Ahmet Agha, whom he has previously married to Hasan Sırrı's nurse and appointed district governor, also becomes an officer after he is also dismissed from his post. Although his dismissal is officially attributed to his illiteracy, even some district governors and provincial

governors of the time are unable to read or write. Delighted with his new rank, Ahmet Agha keeps inventing excuses to visit the government building, simply because soldiers posted at the entrance salute him whenever he arrives.

Decline

After returning to Erzurum, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey serves as a judicial inspector with a salary of 10,000 kurush. When government salaries are reduced, however, his pay falls to 7,000 kurush. By this time, he is suffering from arteriosclerosis and can barely make it to work. When doctors recommend that he live in a warmer climate, he submits a petition requesting a transfer. The women of the household, however, do not wait for the transfer to be approved and leave for Istanbul in the summer of 1879. Their reason for departing early is to enroll Hasan Sırrı in the School of Civil Administration.

Convinced that, in his frail condition, he is unlikely to remarry or lose himself in a life of entertainment, Hasibe Hanım leaves him behind with an ease she has never before felt. After spending the winter alone, however, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey requests retirement and returns to Istanbul with Ahmet Agha, first traveling to Trabzon and then continuing by sea. Neglect and illness have aged him so severely that he appears almost ten years older.

In Istanbul

After staying as guests in the home of Hacı Âkif Efendi, the family rents a house and, believing that they will never have to move again, buys new furniture. Hasan Sırrı also finds that the headmaster of the Bayezit Secondary School, Abdurrahman Şeref Efendi, has become the director of the School of Civil Administration. After a brief entrance examination, he is admitted to the school.

The women begin paying and receiving social visits. A year after Ahmet Nâfiz Bey returns to Istanbul, however, he becomes bedridden, and from 1882 to 1887 Hasibe Hanım remains constantly at his bedside. During these years, her hair grows so long that it reaches her knees.

One Friday afternoon in 1887, an elderly woman arrives at the door and asks permission to perform her ablutions and pray inside the house. The family welcomes her in. As soon as she enters, she senses that there is a sick man upstairs and says that she would like to recite prayers over him and blow on him as a form of healing. Since Ahmet Nâfiz Bey has never believed in such practices, they first ask for his permission. He agrees. After finishing her prayers, the woman recites prayers over him. For the next three weeks, she comes every day shortly before the noon prayer and does the same. As a result of these prayers, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey is able to get to his feet and, on two occasions, sit on the cushion opposite him, a simple act he has long wondered whether he would ever be able to do again.

The woman assures the family that Ahmet Nâfiz Bey will recover completely. Everyone in the household comes to believe that she is a holy woman except Sabure Hanım, who remains unconvinced and one day offends her. From that day on, the woman never returns, and before another three weeks pass, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey dies. Two hours after the funeral, Hasibe Hanım enters his room and finds her mother-in-law, Sabure Hanım, drinking the warm milk that had been set aside for her late son. Sabure Hanım shows no profound grief over her son's death, nor does she ever shed tears when speaking of him.

Hasan Sırrı graduates fourth in the third and largest class of the School of Civil Administration. First place goes to İbrahim Hakkı, who later serves as Grand Vizier during the Second Constitutional Period. Both are appointed as trainee officials (*mülâzım*) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where they are responsible for handling foreign correspondence. Because Hakkı's father, Remzi Efendi of Chios, serves as chairman of the Municipal Council of Istanbul, the position is of little consequence to him, but Hasan Sırrı supplements his income by working as a geography teacher.

Later, both men begin serving as translators in Abdülhamid II's palace with a monthly salary of 1,500 kurush. Their duties include translating foreign newspapers, drafting telegrams to be sent abroad, and translating detective novels that the sultan enjoys listening to before going to sleep. When newly recruited translators take over the last of these responsibilities, they continue carrying out their remaining duties until the Second Constitutional Period.

By the time his father dies, however, Hasan Sırrı is twenty-six years old and spends more and more of his time strolling through Beyoğlu. When he reaches the age of twenty-eight, his mother, Hasibe Hanım, determined to put an end to this way of life, joins forces with Naime Hanım and decides that it is time for him to marry.

Sırrı Bey's Marriage

Sırrı Bey and his friend Hakkı Bey frequently go to Beyoğlu, both to take French and English lessons and to enjoy its social life. When his mother, Hasibe Hanım, and Naime Hanım decide that marriage will encourage him to lead a more disciplined life, Sırrı Bey agrees. They therefore begin visiting prospective brides.

In those years, women looking for a bride either arranged visits in advance or went from neighborhood to neighborhood, asking watchmen and herbalists whether there was an unmarried young woman in the area. They would then arrive unannounced at the recommended house. Mothers with marriageable daughters understood the purpose of such visits and invited them inside. If the young woman was not particularly beautiful, she was carefully dressed for the occasion; if she was beautiful, she appeared just as she was. If the visitors were unimpressed, they quickly finished their coffee and left. If they liked her, however, they tried to engage her in conversation so that they could see her teeth. If she spoke too readily, she was considered overly eager to marry; if she appeared too sullen or overly serious, it was assumed that she was either in love with someone else or had become conceited.

At one point, they visit the daughter of a woman who is herself the granddaughter of one of the former ministers of finance, while her own brother is about to become the son-in-law of the grand vizier. The young woman immediately sits down at the piano and plays several songs. Hasibe Hanım decides against the match, believing that such a bride would never consent to live in their modest house in Aksaray and that her son would instead have to become a husband living with his wife's family. Moreover, since the young woman appears to be over twenty years old, she considers her rather late for marriage.

During the years they spend in Erzurum, Hasibe Hanım becomes acquainted with the wife of Arif Bey, secretary to Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, and after moving to Istanbul they become neighbors in Aksaray. Arif Bey's wife tells Hasibe Hanım that the widow and daughter of İbrahim Pasha, who dies after retiring as commander of the artillery of the Third Army, live nearby and recommends that she meet the daughter. Following a fire and a series of financial setbacks, the girl's mother, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım, rents out their own house and lives with her daughter in the home of a widowed friend whose late husband is Tahir Pasha. Her daughter, Melek, graduates second in her class from the Women's Teacher Training School.

Hasibe Hanım and Naime Hanım visit the home where the two widows live to meet Melek. She appears before them in simple clothes, with a cloth wrapped around her neck because of a sore throat. Feeling unwell, she is unable to stay long. Even so, Hasibe Hanım and Naime Hanım are deeply impressed by her. Sırrı Bey agrees to marry Melek because his mother approves of her, but Ayşe Sıdika Hanım, who takes a dislike to Hasibe Hanım, is reluctant to give her consent. To persuade her, Hasibe Hanım and Naime Hanım tell her that Sırrı Bey may one day even become grand vizier. Ayşe Sıdika Hanım is convinced, but Melek wishes to see the man she is to marry, even if only from a distance.

Sırrı Bey is a short man, with a disproportionately long torso, thick black eyebrows, a rounded chin, and thick glasses because of his myopia. His manners, however, are exceptionally refined. One day, elegantly dressed, he strolls slowly past Melek's house. She likes what she sees, and they marry in 1889.

Sırrı Bey never becomes grand vizier, but his classmate Hakkı Bey does. At the age of thirty-two, Sırrı Bey is promoted to the rank of bâlâ, one of the highest ranks in the Ottoman civil hierarchy. In the year he attains this rank, even Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, though older and already a grand vizier, stands two ranks below him in the Ottoman hierarchy.

Ayşe Sıdika Hanım

Ayşe Sıdika Hanım is the daughter of Zorluoğlu Ali, who lives near Adana. She has two sisters and a brother named Hüsnü. During the brief reign of Murad V, Hüsnü Bey serves as a chamberlain in the imperial palace. His son Selim, better known by the pen name Avnullah Kâzımî, later becomes the father of the poet Halide Nusret Hanım. Nahid Sırrı Örik notes that the right to use the surname Zorlu

belongs to Selim Bey's brother, Süleyman Tevfik Bey, although the son of one of their maternal cousins also adopts the surname.

In 1859, while living in Baghdad, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım is a maternal cousin of the wife of Ömer Pasha, the governor and military commander of Baghdad. Why she is in Baghdad at the age of sixteen is unknown, but during one of her visits, Ömer Pasha decides that she would be a suitable wife for İbrahim Pasha, a widowed artillery commander. He writes to Ayşe Sıdika Hanım's mother, Hasibe Hanım, requesting her consent to the marriage. Once permission arrives, the marriage is solemnized.

Hasibe Hanım is the sister of a pasha and lives in a mansion in Samatya known as the Pink Mansion. She enjoys a long life, raises and later marries off one of her granddaughters, Rabia. Because Rabia is married as a child, however, she is not legally entitled under Islamic law to seek a divorce until she reaches an age at which marriage can be consummated. Hasibe Hanım ensures that she obtains a divorce as soon as she becomes legally able to do so.

Although Ayşe Sıdika Hanım is only sixteen when she marries, İbrahim Pasha is sixty-five. His previous wife and their son, İhsan, have already died in Baghdad. Although he is widely believed to be Russian, Nahid Sırrı Örik argues that he is in fact Polish. He bases this conclusion on the fact that, after retiring before the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, İbrahim Pasha weeps because he cannot take part in the war. Örik speculates that he is one of those who escape execution after participating in the 1830 Polish uprising against Russia. Although he does not know İbrahim Pasha's original name, he relates that, after converting to Islam, he never neglects a single prayer. Ayşe Sıdika Hanım, however, reportedly complains, "I've had enough of this priest's endless prayers!" The same Ömer Pasha who arranges their marriage is himself a Croat who has fled from Austria to the Ottoman Empire and hopes to establish kinship ties by marrying him to a young woman related to his own wife.

On their wedding night, however, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım bursts into tears when she sees that her bridegroom is old enough to be her grandfather. İbrahim Pasha immediately leaves the room and returns carrying a drawer filled with the jewelry left behind by his late wife. The sight of the jewels stops her tears, but she never comes to love him. Even while he lies on his deathbed years later, she does not miss the opportunity to attend a wedding.

During their fifteen years of marriage, they have seven children. Only two daughters, Emine Binnaz and Melek Meliha, and two sons, Rüştü and Ömer, survive into adulthood. They spend most of their married life in Monastir because of İbrahim Pasha's appointments, and all but one of their children are born there. When they later sell the mansion they purchase in Monastir and move to Istanbul, they buy a large new house in Aksaray. After İbrahim Pasha dies, he is buried in Merkez Efendi Cemetery, the same cemetery where Ahmet Nâfiz Pasha is later buried.

Widowed in her thirties, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım rejects every marriage proposal she receives and continues living in the mansion. She marries her daughter Emine Binnaz to an army captain named Numan. While living with the family, however, Numan Bey contributes nothing toward household expenses. Annoyed by this, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım forbids meat from being served with the meals prepared separately for the couple. Emine Binnaz informs her husband of the situation by writing him a couplet. Ashamed after reading it, Numan Bey begins contributing to the household expenses. Even so, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım never warms to her son-in-law.

When Numan Bey is sent to a region that, under the terms of the Congress of Berlin, is to be ceded to Montenegro, an Albanian uprising breaks out. He and several other soldiers are imprisoned in a tower, which is then set on fire, and they perish inside. Unable to recover from this loss, Emine Binnaz always remembers her husband with deep affection. Ayşe Sıdika Hanım, however, considers the small, slight Numan Bey unworthy of such devotion. Whenever she sees her daughter weeping, she remarks, "I simply cannot understand why this foolish woman is so desperately in love with that scrawny man!"

Nahid Sırrı Örik recounts that, when he meets a customs officer in İzmir in 1924 and learns that the man is Numan Bey's brother and resembles the deceased almost exactly, he cannot help feeling that Ayşe Sıdika Hanım may have had a point.

After losing the fortune left to her through stock market speculation and seeing her mansion destroyed by fire, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım marries Emine Binnaz to Bekir Nizami Pasha of Kütahya and sends the couple to Edirne. Despite her financial difficulties, she spends everything she has left building a new twenty-room mansion on the site of the one that burned down. Her motivation is to impress a woman whom she first meets in Baghdad, encounters again in Monastir during her husband's posting there, and later has as a neighbor in Aksaray. Speaking years later about this long-standing rivalry, the woman mocks Ayşe Sıdika Hanım for building a twenty-room mansion instead of moving into a house she could actually afford, saying that she lives on bread and cheese simply to keep up appearances.

In the end, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım is left without a single kurush. She rents the new mansion to a school and moves with her children into the home of the widow of a man named Tahir Pasha as a paying lodger. Even so, she sends her sons to military schools and enrolls Melek Meliha in the Women's Teacher Training School.

Hediye Hanım

Hediye Hanım, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım's elder sister, is married into the family of a pasha. One day, an elderly woman comes to her mansion and explains that her son has fallen in love with Hediye Hanım after seeing her riding in a carriage. She says that he has taken to his bed and is dying of love, and begs Hediye Hanım to come to their house under the protection of her guards just once so that her son may see her. Hediye Hanım refuses the request without pity. As she leaves, the woman curses her, wishing that she will one day lose her beauty.

Seven years later, an orderly from Kosovo who serves Hediye Hanım's husband, Şevki Pasha, asks for help, saying that he has committed a murder in his hometown and is about to be arrested. Şevki Pasha replies that, if he has committed murder, he must face the consequences. The following morning, when the orderly sees military police arriving to arrest him, he rushes into Şevki Pasha's room. Şevki Pasha is reading the Qur'an when the man attacks him with his bayonet. Hediye Hanım throws herself in front of her husband in an attempt to save him. Şevki Pasha is killed, while Hediye Hanım survives but loses her beauty after suffering severe wounds to her face and neck.

Becoming In-Laws

Sırrı Bey and Melek Hanım's engagement takes place in the home of Tahir Pasha's widow, while the wedding is held at Sırrı Bey's house. Since neither family is in a strong financial position, the celebrations are modest. Among the guests is Ömer Pasha, who, together with several others, looks down on every aspect of the occasion. Yet the gifts they bring are remarkably cheap and carelessly chosen. Feeling humiliated, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım takes her sons and moves to the home of her elder daughter in Edirne.

Melek Hanım gets along extremely well with her mother-in-law, Hasibe Hanım. Each time she calls her "mother," Hasibe Hanım rejoices that she finally has a daughter as well. Once Sırrı Bey's financial situation improves, the couple moves into a house near Yıldız Palace. In 1890, they have a daughter. Ayşe Sıdika Hanım names her Ayşe Nihal.

After the birth, Hasibe Hanım overhears Ayşe Sıdika Hanım speaking with some of her relatives who are staying with them. Referring to Sabure Hanım and Naime Hanım, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım says, "We are not low-born women like that; we are ladies of good family." Furious, Hasibe Hanım replies that the kind of lady Ayşe Sıdika Hanım is can be judged from the cheap gifts her guests have brought.

Despite everything, Ayşe Sıdika Hanım grows very fond of Sırrı Bey. She dislikes Bekir Nizami Pasha, the second husband of her daughter Binnaz, so much that whenever the wives of pashas come to visit, she repeatedly warns him not to say anything embarrassing. In response, Bekir Nizami Pasha puts one of her headdresses on his head, wraps himself in one of her fur coats, ties a ribbon around his neck, and, when the guests arrive, peeks through the half-open door and asks loudly enough for Ayşe Sıdika Hanım to hear, "Can I come in?"

Ayşe Sıdika Hanım spends the last days of her life in Sırrı Bey's house under the care of her in-laws. Whenever she catches sight of herself in a mirror, she laughs at her own frailty, saying, "Well then, damn you, you old hag!" She dies in 1891, when Ayşe Nihal is ten months old, and is buried beside İbrahim Pasha.

Sabure Hanım does everything she can to ensure that Ayşe Sıdika Hanım's son Ömer does not feel the absence of his mother. She lets him sleep in her room and encourages him to perform the daily prayers, even warming the water for his ablutions beforehand.

After her mother's death, however, Melek begins to suffer at the hands of the three women in the household. Sabure Hanım, Naime Hanım, and Hasibe Hanım all suddenly become difficult mothers-in-law. When Melek learns from her husband that they can move into a separate house whenever she wishes, she threatens to leave with her husband and daughter. Unable to bear the thought of being separated from baby Ayşe Nihal, the three elderly women soften their attitude. According to Hasibe Hanım, Melek once becomes so angry with Sabure Hanım that she chases her upstairs with a walking stick. From then on, it is the daughter-in-law who has the final say in the household.

While Sırrı Bey teaches in the law faculty and serves as chief secretary at the ministry, his improved finances allow the family to move into a house opposite the police station on the slope leading up to Yıldız Palace. Nahid Sırrı Örik is born there on Friday, 22 May 1895. Three weeks before his birth, Naime Hanım dies after a two-month illness. She is buried in Abbasağa Cemetery, which is later converted into a public park. Only Sırrı Bey and Hasibe Hanım truly mourn her death. All of her remaining property passes to Sırrı Bey, while the corsets she leaves behind are worn years later by relatives amid bursts of laughter.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Slavery Because of her beauty, Sabure Hanım is abducted from the Caucasus as a child and sold into slavery. The name given to her by her family is unknown. The slave trader who purchases her gives her one name, Hacı Kâmilî Pasha, who later buys her, gives her another, and the man she eventually marries gives her yet another. Each sale therefore brings a new identity. The slave trader is the sister of a former grand vizier and uses her family's political influence to conduct the trade, while Sabure Hanım's first purchaser is himself a pasha. Slavery and the practices associated with it are therefore neither condemned by the Ottoman government nor regarded as unusual by society. They are treated as an ordinary part of everyday life.

Gender Although Sabure Hanım is financially able to live independently after the death of her first husband, Mehmet Sabit Bey, social pressure leads her to marry again. The day after the wedding, however, her second husband, Hacı Salih Agha, frees his enslaved concubine Naime Hanım and marries her as well. Sabure Hanım is therefore forced to share her home with a co-wife until Hacı Salih Agha's death. Similarly, her daughter-in-law Hasibe Hanım also has to live, albeit briefly, with a co-wife after Ahmet Nâfiz Bey marries Fehime Hanım during his appointment in Muş. What ultimately spares Hasibe Hanım is not her husband's rejection of polygamy as a matter of principle, but his disappointment that Fehime Hanım is uneducated. More generally, marriages are arranged before the bride and groom even meet. Hasan Sırrı Bey's marriage to Melek Meliha Hanım marks a change in this pattern. Melek refuses to marry until she has at least seen him from a distance. Although marriage resembles a gamble for both women and men, men enjoy a much greater degree of freedom, since they may marry enslaved women already living in their households or take additional wives while remaining married.

PSYCHOLOGY

Suffering Sabure Hanım suffers because she is forced to live with her co-wife for the rest of her husband's life, while Hasibe Hanım lives with the constant knowledge that her husband is never truly faithful to her. As she grows older, Sabure Hanım gradually transforms her sorrow into anger. Hasibe Hanım, by contrast, continues to live with the fear of further betrayal until Ahmet Nâfiz Bey falls seriously ill and becomes bedridden.

POLITICS

Conflict The narrative also unfolds against the backdrop of the major political conflicts of the Ottoman Empire. One is the tension created by the reform policies of Mahmud II. The violent events surrounding the abolition of the Janissary Corps illustrate the scale of this conflict. Ahmet Nâfiz Bey's

repeated dismissals and reappointments throughout his bureaucratic career likewise reflect both struggles within the Ottoman administration and the ambiguous relationship between the central government and powerful local elites.

Inclusion The careers of İbrahim Pasha, who is of Polish origin, and Ömer Pasha, who is of Croatian origin, illustrate that service and loyalty to the state often mattered more than ethnic background in the Ottoman Empire. Their rise to high office after converting to Islam demonstrates a form of conditional inclusion through which individuals from diverse backgrounds could reach the highest ranks of the imperial administration.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Sabure Hanım's story illustrate slavery in the Ottoman Empire? In what ways does it differ from slavery in other contexts, such as the United States?
2. What do Mehmet Sabit Bey's decision to teach Sabure Hanım to read, Ahmet Nâfiz Bey's desire to marry a literate woman (and his disappointment with Fehime Hanım), and Melek Meliha Hanım's graduation from the Teacher Training School for Women reveal about changing ideals of masculinity during the late Ottoman modernization process?
3. Can literacy be understood as something that contributed to marital privacy during this period? How might the relationship between monogamous marital intimacy and modernization be interpreted?
4. Looking at the Ottoman Empire through the lives of women reveals how modernization unfolded across both gender and generations. In this light, what continuities and changes can we identify between the experiences of Sabure Hanım and Melek Meliha Hanım?

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