Political Fictions and Fictional Politics:
A Comparative Study of the Political Unconscious in the Turkish and Kurdish Novel

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Hilary 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my supervisor, Laurent Mignon, whose support, advice and encouragement have helped me along the course of my research. I would also like to thank my college advisor, Celia J. Kerslake, for her continuous support and kind words. Special thanks to Theo Maarten van Lint, Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Marilyn Booth, Mohamed-Salah Omri, and Celemencé Scalbert-Yücel for all the constructive feedbacks at different stages of the thesis. Without their insightful comments, hard questions, detailed and critical responses this thesis would have been a conceptual and methodological mess.

I thank my friends Erdal Aydın, Adem Gergöy, Suat Baran, and Rûken Alp for their help in finding books and other reading materials I needed throughout my research. My deepest gratitude to István Aranyosi, Idriss Jebari, Sam Spitz, and Nagihan Gür for all their invaluable friendship and unconditional help.

I am also grateful to all administrative and academic staff of my faculty and college, Oriental Studies and St Antony's College, as well as the Social Sciences University of Ankara for their constant support. I would also like to thank Ömer Hoca for believing in me and this project.

I would not have survived my PhD without the fantastic help, support, and guidance of two magnificent colleagues and friends, Seda Erkoç Yeni and Karen Taliaferro. Seda helped me with the final editing, reading the whole text, line by line. Karen, not only an intellectual lodestar but also a compassionate friend one can only wish for, helped me with editing from the first sentence to the last full-stop. Finding Karen was a miraculous strike of serendipity! I sincerely believe that the Lord was profoundly pleased by one of my deeds in the past, for I cannot explain how I ever deserved to be so fortunate as to be rewarded by her friendship, guidance, and help throughout this challenging process.

A heart, no matter how big it is, cannot possibly hold all the gratitude, love, and respect I have for my friends Nuran Kekeç, Ebru Onay, and Ömer Faruk Yekdeş. Their intellectually stimulating friendship, support, and love shone through all the darkness that filled my miserable PhD life over the last few years.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family for supporting me spiritually and financially throughout this difficult journey and for making this life a safer and more enjoyable adventure in general.

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a comparative and interdisciplinary investigation into the relationship between politics and the Turkish and Kurdish novels, which are treated not only as artistic constructions but also as socio-cultural and historical artefacts. The primary objective of this investigation is to understand the principle social, political, and historical reasons and root causes behind the close relationship between politics and literatures in Turkey and the principle socio-political and literary ramifications of such strong relationship. Towards this end, the thesis focuses on four main themes: language, love, religion, and history. Besides being the most common novelistic themes in the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions, these are inherently heavily politicised and ethno-nationalistically charged themes—thus especially suitable for such inquiry.

In line with this politico-historical and literary vein, the thesis also discusses some of the main political questions in Turkey, *viz.*, the reasons behind the failure of Turkish democracy, its maladies and the resultant deadlock on some of the most important issues of the modern history of the country such as the Kurdish imbroglio and the conflict of secularisation and Islam. As the discussions on politics of love, language, religion, and history show, profound ideological competitions and antagonisms do not necessarily mean divergent political and literary structures. As such, the strong links between the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions, as well as the ordeal of the Kurdish question and democratisation in Turkey, is as much caused by rival nationalisms, hostile ideological positions, and the like as by congruity, parallel political visions, and similar power structures. The main argument of the thesis, thus, is that the Kurdish and Turkish literary, political, and intellectual actors could not contribute towards the solution of the persistent political and literary questions in Turkey because of their failure in adopting a transformative politics and developing fully autonomous literatures. The future of the two literatures, as was in the past, this thesis argues, will remain intrinsically bound to the political structures and developments and the future of democracy in Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

FICTION, POLITICS, DEFINITIONS, AND BOUNDARIES

"Politics in a work of literature," Stendhal wrote in *The Red and The Black,* "is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar, and yet a thing to which it is not possible to refuse one's attention" (Howe 15). Politics in Kurdish and Turkish fiction, however, is not like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert; rather, fiction is a concert of pistol-shots. Is it possible, Irvin Howe asks, that "the noise of the interruption ever become part of the performance?" (15) We might further ask whether the noise can be the purpose, the content, the style or even the essence of the performance, as politics is in the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions.[1]

The history of the disagreement between literature and politics is an old one. Stuart A. Scheingold states that "the political novel is viewed virtually as an oxymoron—at odds with literary excellence" (6). This view is partly understandable given some examples of the political novel, *e.g.*, socialist realist ones, that are indeed "inevitably polemics which trump and thus subvert literary values" (Scheingold 6). But it is also true

[1] By the "Turkish and Kurdish literary institution," I mean the totality of the processes of literary pre-production, production, and post-production. These could be listed as follows: the political and historical contexts that a given text is produced in and formed by; the various identity domains (ethnic, linguistic, religious, class, sexual and so forth) that determine or have an impact on the way a text is written and interpreted; the literary arena in which a text is circulated through literary prizes, bookstores, commercials, publishing houses, *etc.*; and the other post-production spheres that play a crucial role on a text's destiny, like readership, literary canon, literary criticism, academia, and schools. I opted for the term "literary institution" rather than "literary field" primarily because of the political connotations and implications of the term. At first, I used "field" throughout my thesis without taking the sociological connotations of the term properly into account. The term "field," which was coined and employed by Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (1991), indeed, could be fitting for a sociological investigation of literatures, or sociology of literature. Bourdieu and the field theory would have been largely congruent with my use of Jameson and *The Political Unconscious*, too. However, for a study that focuses, as does mine, on the relationship between politics and literature or the politics of fiction and fictional politics, I think the term "institution" better describes the totality of actors, factors, capitals, structures, processes, customs, procedures, systems, and organisational and legal frameworks that encompass and are encompassed by literature. I am indebted to Mohamed-Salah Omri and Clémence Scalbert-Yücel for their valuable feedback on this matter.

that there are outstanding political novels produced by some of the biggest names of the 20th century. Many scholars and critics from mainly literary criticism and political science, like Irvin Howe, John Horton and Andrea T. Baumeister, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Maureen Whitebrook have questioned the relationship between politics and literature and analyzed many masterpieces of fiction and political fiction. Although their engagement with the question arose from different perspectives—the literary critics were interested in how certain literary works attended to political issues while the political scientists' main interest was the employment of fictional works for a better apprehension of political theories and issues—in certain claims they were in an agreement. Both agreed upon the importance of narratives in describing and reflecting a political milieu and the climate of mind in a given period.[2]

In one of the earliest studies on the topic, Howe described the political novel as "a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting" (17). He attributed a dual mission to political novel: "to illuminate the shortcomings of the prevailing political order and to identify how best to transcend them" (Scheingold 8). Despite scholarly attention to differences, there appears to be more or less a general agreement on the power of fiction, particularly novels, in describing and *redescribing*, and thus helping us to understand, reset, resolve, and reimagine a political matter, question, and milieu. That is, we understand the world and thus all worldly issues including truth, reality, and politics, in narrative; and there is no outside to the political, *viz.*, the exercise of power and governmental, institutional, social, and individual relations

[2] Yet one can ask what is really so superior and more illuminating about the accounts and descriptions of novelists regarding a political milieu than the verifiable observations of political and social scientists? Richard Rorty argues for "the superiority of imaginative literature to philosophical argument both as a way of gaining a richer understanding of human life and as a more effective means of persuading people to adopt more attractive principles and practices" (cited in Horton and Baumeister 11). Put differently, human reality and life is more effectively and convincingly questioned, investigated, and reflected upon when it is reimagined and redescribed.

of power and related competitions towards certain economic, social, cultural, linguistic, educational capital, material or non-material stakes and rewards.

When considered in the Turkish and Kurdish contexts, on the other hand, the question of the detrimental effects of politics on literature becomes even less intricate since both Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions have achieved a relatively lesser volume of autonomy from politics, at least, compared to the more dominant American, English, French and other literary institutions, in which the question is generally discussed. In a country where journalists and writers are constantly accused and convicted of propagating malicious thoughts and terrorism, have their books publically burned, and are even assassinated, it is impossible for the literary institution to attain full autonomy from politics. Indeed, politics pervades every sphere of life in Turkey, and literature is no exception.

Even though the amount of direct evidence available in literary criticism is quite low, it is generally believed that, politics has always robbed literature of its literariness with the country's ever-restive political questions. I hold, however, that despite its undeniable orientation towards mundane and immediate politics, literary criticism should receive the political as a *sine qua non* sphere of understanding and interpretation in Turkey. Put differently, the political is as much a part of literature as literary genres or bookshops; as such, the political is not detrimental or rewarding but rather exists naturally in, for and about literature. It is literature's context, plot and subtext. Jameson's famous slogan, in *The Political Unconscious*, "Always historicize!" can be reformulated in the Turkish context as "Always politicize!," for in Turkey, politics is "the one absolute and we may even say 'transhistorical'" (Jameson IX) thread, running through the aesthetic, ethical, ideological, social, and sexual realms. In fact, to say "political fiction" is to say one word too many, as there neither is nor can there be any other but a political fiction in

the Kurdish and Turkish contexts. To my view, the relation between literature and politics in the Turkish and Kurdish contexts is a supplementary relation, in which politics and literature are added to and also supplant each other. Thus, the literary and the political, here, become neither equivalent nor contrary to one another; in fact, as Barbara Johnson put it in her "Translator's Introduction" to Derrida's *Dissemination*, "they are no longer even equivalent to themselves," they become their own difference from themselves (xiii).

In the fictional works of Kurdish and Turkish writers, politics is not a mere content; most of the time, literary production is itself a form of politics. Particularly in the Kurdish context, we could read literary texts like very long placards, or very detailed news, objections in courtrooms, confessions signed forcibly, petitions written hopelessly, and so forth, as much as aesthetic and literary productions. Remezan Alan, in an article in *Bendname* entitled "the Rejection of a Minority," states that "the colour of collectivity and politic, just like a destiny, is bound to be found in the texts that are produced by Kurdish writers—both those who write in Kurdish and who do not" (72). This is because, as Uzun maintains, "everything which has to do with Kurds is political" (cited in Ahmadzadeh, *Nation and Novel* 134). The picture is not entirely different for the Turkish literary institution. Polarization, authoritarianism, ideological social control, and political volatility have never left center stage in Turkey; naturally, they occupied an equally central place in the Turkish literary institution and novel.[3]

What follows, then, is a comparative and interdisciplinary investigation into the relationship between politics and the Turkish and Kurdish novels, which are treated not only as artistic constructions but also as cultural, social, political, and historical artefacts.

[3] This is nowhere more evident than in the literary currents of *12 Mart Romanı* (Novels of March 12) and *12 Eylül Romanı* (Novels of September 12) that are named after military coups of 1960 and 1980, respectively.

The primary objective of this investigation is to understand the principle social, political, and historical reasons and root causes behind the close relationship between politics and literatures in Turkey and the primary socio-political and literary ramifications of such strong relationship. In line with this politico-historical and literary vein, the thesis also attempts to understand some of the main political, social and historical questions in Turkey, *viz.*, the reasons behind the failure of Turkish democracy, its maladies and the resultant deadlock on some of the most important political questions of modern history of the country such as the Kurdish imbroglio, the conflict of secularisation and Islam, and the like, using rather unconventional and unappreciated resources in Turkish and Kurdish scholarship: literary texts. The thesis suggests new interpretations and analysis of select fictional works in Turkish and Kurdish with an eye towards their political natures, significance, and ramifications. To this end, I selected four main themes, language, love, religion, and history, which, besides being the most common novelistic themes in the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions, are inherently heavily politicised and ethno-nationalistically charged—thus especially suitable for such inquiry. In accordance with these themes the thesis analyses and compares select literary texts from the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions with a specific eye towards the development and contextualisation of a given theme and of relevant political, social, and historical questions. In light of these objectives and analysis the thesis attempts to discuss, understand, and answer the following questions: Do the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions in Turkey differ from each other in their means and motives for being political or in the way they deal with political content? What are the main differences and similarities between these two literary institutions, and the politicisation of their literary texts? To what extent do literary productions influence Turkish and Kurdish political

minds and *vice versa*? What do the literary productions of Turkish and Kurdish writers tell us about the main political, social, and historical questions in Turkey?

By "the Turkish novel," I mean the novels that are written, read, and circulated in the Turkish literary institution. By "the Kurdish novel," on the other hand, I mean the Kurmanji novel written in Turkey or the diaspora within the Turkish context, that is to say, the Kurmanji novel in the Kurdish-Turkish literary institution. The designation of the borders of the Kurdish novel constitutes a far more complicated case than the Turkish one. As Hashem Ahmadzadeh points out in *Nation and Novel*, "[t]he absence of a defined juridico-political Kurdish sovereignty, in other words the non-existence of a Kurdish state, makes it almost impossible to decide the limits of Kurdish literature as a national literature" (131). Without the opportunity to interact with other Kurdish writers in political and intellectual community, then, the development of Kurdish literature faces an uphill battle; in effect, the diaspora provides the only space for Kurdish writers across the geographical and contextual spectrum (Iraqi, Syrian, Turkish, Iranian, and others) to meet and interact with one another. The various influences—economic, political, social, and cultural—that contribute to the character and form of literature have developed divergent structures and patterns in the sovereign countries that comprise Kurdistan. The diaspora's role in bridging linguistic and contextual gaps across Kurdish communities is thus a vital one.

Diaspora, then, did not only provide Kurdish literature, particularly fiction, with a free space in which to develop; in a way, it united the divided Kurdistan. Although it has developed separately in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, the reality of Kurdish nationalism, Ahmadzadeh writes, "with its continuing endeavours in search of a Kurdish identity, gives the basis of justifying the acceptance of a Kurdish literature in spite of its discontinuous and fragmented character" (*Nation and Novel* 139). This is why

Ahmadzadeh brings together Kurdish novels written in both Sorani and Kurmanji dialects and from different geographical origins.

In this thesis, however, I diverge from Ahmadzadeh in two respects: first, my methodology, rather than dealing with texts, compares *contexts*. This widens the interpretive subject from texts as such to the larger picture of texts, subtexts, and political/social/historical contexts. Providing a pan-Kurdish comparative analysis of the Kurdish novel's context, rather than text (as Ahmadzadeh does), would obviously exceed the confines of a single project. Secondly, despite the fact that Ahmadzadeh's remarks on Kurdish nationalism provide a compelling case for a unified Kurdish literature regardless of different dialects[4] and contexts, I argue that Kurdish nationalism nevertheless remains profoundly fragmented. Even if the way they evolve, their ambition, and foundational characteristics resemble each other closely, there is good reason to approach Kurdish nationalisms in their respective contexts.

I selected texts for this research according to following criteria: (i) *context* (especially the period and the questions that the story addresses), (ii) *theme* (to cover politicisation of what I argue to be four major themes in the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions: language, religion, love, and history), and (iii) *representation* (I selected works with an eye for including both those that are prominent in literary historiographies and canons as well as works that are remain marginal). In accordance with these criteria, I analyse: for the politics of language, Hesenê Metê's *Êş* (Pain, 1998); for the politics of love, Esat Mahmut Karakurt's *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* (The Girl Who is Waiting for the

[4] Haig and Öpengin identify five main dialect groups in Kurdish language: (i) *Northern Kurdish* (Kurmanji) which is often divided into Badini and Kurmanji varieties, (ii) *Central Kurdish* (Sorani) with its many regional dialects, (iii) *Southern Kurdish* which includes the varieties such as Kelhuri and Kirmashani, (iv) *Gorani* which covers also Hawrami or Hawramani, and (v) *Zazaki* and its three main dialects (Haig and Öpengin 110).

Mountains, 1936) and Mehmet Uzun's *Ronî Mîna Evînê Tarî Mîna Mirinê* (Light Like Love, Darkness Like Death, 1998); for the politics of religion, Orhan Pamuk's *Kar* (Snow, 2002) and for the politics of history, Kemal Tahir's *Devlet Ana* (Mother State, 1967) and Ereb Shemo's *Dimdim* (Castle Dimdim, 1966). In addition to these, the thesis also provides comparisons of works in the same language with the same problematic in order to extend the limits of comparison and to diminish the role of misleading factors such as gender, time, and genre.

Given the long established agreement on the interconnected and overlapping construction of national identities and national languages and literatures (*i.e*., as unified, standardised, homogenised, and even purified national constructions) following Benedict Anderson's seminal study *Imagined Communities* (1983), it comes as no surprise that issues concerning national identity and nationalism take decidedly political forms when they enter the realm of literature. As scholars such as Kerslake (2002), Alan (2009), Ahmadadeh (2009), Yücel (2011), Scalbert-Yücel (2012), and Galip (2015) have shown, the Kurdish and Turkish cases are no exceptions to this rule. In both, the construction of a modern and thus national language and literature and the process of national identity formation have been concurrent, mutually inclusive, supportive, and productive. On a preliminary note, it could be argued that in both literary institutions, politics, regardless of theme, question, and context, decidedly attracts nationalism and national identity, and *vice versa*. Let us, then, take this opportunity to briefly discuss the development of the Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms.

I. Sleeping Beauties and Awakened Monsters: Turkish and Kurdish Nationalisms

I approach nationalism in general, and Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms in particular, following Michael Billig's understanding of nationalism, as first and foremost

an ideological and political "discourse that constantly shapes our consciousness and the way we constitute the meaning of the world" (cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism* 4). Nationalism, Billig taught us, "determines our collective identity by producing and reproducing us as 'nationals'" (cited in Özkırımlı, *Theories of Nationalism* 4). Although, Alan Finlayson reminds us "[n]o two nationalisms can be the same" (100), there are nevertheless very similar nationalist discourses, processes of nationalisation, and ultimately, nationalisms. In the cases of Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms, similarities are mostly due to a shared history of modernisation, institutionalism, and state-formation. This is to say, the nature of relationship between the two nationalist discourses in question is not simply caused by the main universal attributes of nationalism, such as being relational and the need for a national other; rather, the very formation processes, dynamics, agents, parties, and socio-cultural, economic, and political factors are intertwined. There can be no clear-cut borders between the two. They are not merely similar nationalist discourses; they have been, and still are, formed in/by/through their relation to one another. Put differently, they are conjoined by a "dialect of denial and resistance," (Vali, "The Kurds and Their 'Others'" 82).

There is a great deal more scholarship on the characteristics of Turkish nationalisms and collective identity than Kurdish nationalisms and identity as a nation.[5] Such literature addresses the similarities of Turkish nationalisms with other post-imperial nationalist movements, the peculiarities of Kemalist nationalism, its linguistic and

[5] A quick glance at the nationalism scholarship reveals that the number of references to the Turkish case (with the key concepts of Kemalist nationalism, Ottoman-Turkish nationalism, the Turks) is disproportionately high in comparison with the number of references to the Kurdish case. In five of the most prominent works of the literature—Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) and *Nationalism* (1997), Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (1990), and Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* (1993)—there are more than 20 references to Turkish nationalism, including an entire chapter and additional subchapter on the topic. By contrast, there is only one mention (in Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, in the context of the Somalis) to the Kurdish case.

historiographic project, its secular and religious aspects, its assimilative, assaultive, centralised and discriminative character and so forth. The Kurdish case, however, is often treated within the scope of divergent or marginal nationalisms, framed by terms and definitions such as "nations without a state" (Guibernau, 1999), "proto-nations" (Hobsbawm, 1990), "ethnic nationalisms" (Smith, 1994), and the like. Various scholars have adopted or argued that these terms are more helpful in understanding the peculiarity of the Kurdish example.[6] As I explain below, however, I see the Kurdish case, despite its peripheral, fragmented, transnational character and its historical failure to form its own state, as having a proper nationalist discourse. Further, I think it is more appropriate to consider nationalism in Turkey as a web of nationalist discourses: civic, assaultive, ultra-nationalist, militarist, liberal, Marxist, neo-liberal, conservative, Turkish-Islamist, pan-Turkic, Kurdish, Kurdish-Marxist, Kurdish fanatic Islamist and so forth.

Both Turkish and Kurdish nationalist discourses in Turkey were outcomes of the same politico-historical juncture defined by imperial power shift and shrink, and both resulted from and were shaped by an elite cadre reacting to the Ottoman collapse.[7] In Turkish nationalism scholarship, the late Ottoman era Turkish nationalism is often framed by two major motives, "the twin motives of Turkish nationalism" in Ayşe Kadıoğlu's formulation (35): the preservation of the Ottoman state, meant to hinder the disintegration of the empire, and the articulation of the need for modernisation and Westernisation (Keyman, "Nationalism in Turkey" 19). Kurdish nationalism, too, when first articulated by the late Ottoman-Kurdish intelligentsia in Kurdish periodicals between 1898 and 1919,

[6] For a detailed discussion on ethnic and national identity and categories and terms like *ethnie*, ethnic group, nation, civic nationalism, ethnic model, and the like in the Turkish and Kurdish context, see Kirişçi and Winrow 1-27 and Türkmen-Dervişoğlu 19-50.

[7] As has been pointed by scholars such as Hakan Özoğlu and Djene Rhys Bajalan, Kurdish cultural nationalism was different from other nationalist movements in the late Ottoman Empire in that it was a result of the empire's collapse rather than being a cause of it (Özoğlu 25, Bajalan 145).

had the same twin motives: preserving the Ottoman polity, in which Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights had to be recognised, and an urgent call for taking steps towards modernisation of society through mass education, modern institutions, literacy campaigns, and the like (Yekdeş and Erdem 329-40). It is also worth noting the ever-present defensive nature of this era (and, indeed, in all latecomers to nationalism), since in both cases nationalism emerged out of politico-historical expediency. That is to say, peculiar circumstances at certain stages necessitated the respective intelligentsia's embrace of nationalist thought (Uzer, "The Genealogy of Turkish Nationalism" 107) and has always had to defend itself against dissident, radical, anti-reformist movements (in Turkish ones) and the assimilative, centralising, and homogenising nation-state policies (in Kurdish ones).

From the very beginning, Turkish and Kurdish nationalist discourses contained and still contain "the seeds of both progress and regress," in Tom Nairn's words. Like all other nationalisms, they, too, "propel themselves forward to certain kinds of goals (industrialisation, prosperity, equality with other peoples, *etc.*) *by a certain sort of regression*—by looking inwards, drawing more deeply on their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on" (348). Furthermore, in both contexts, nationalist discourse has become a foundational part of complex chains of meaning-production in its respective political discourse. Thus, it served crucial social functions thanks to its ability to generate historically and politically naturalised identification with constructed rights, needs, characteristics, idiosyncrasies, commonalities, and solidarities—not only in the abstract but also in concrete forms. This is to say, like all nationalist discourses, Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms, too, beside very abstract, equivocal, and doctrinal structures, also have quite definite, concrete and real content. This real content not only involves myths, symbols, rituals and cultural

expressions that keep nationalism in people's day-to-day agenda and public and private sphere, but also incorporates what a given nationalism actually says about the people, sometimes for them, sometimes despite them (Finlayson 108). As Nairn stresses, when a concrete content for nationalism was required, when ideological doctrines needed solid grounds for mass mobilisation, there actually was very little to work on; only the people, vernaculars, somewhat common myths and stories, skin colours and the like were available to deploy (340).

Drawing on studies by Bozarslan (2003), Bora (2011), Uzer (2011), and Galip (2015), it could be argued that both Turkish and Kurdish nationalist discourses have successfully and properly incorporated themselves into the people's collective memory and imagination. As Stuart Hall has pointed out, "the hope of every ideology is to naturalise itself out of History and into Nature and thus to become invisible, to operate unconsciously" (cited in Finlayson 102). Nationalism, too, has attempted such invisibility and naturalisation merely by attaching itself to the nation—a legitimate "flow from the very nature of the historic national people" (Finlayson 102). In addition, both discourses were naturalised in similar ways, since they were formulated by intellectual and political actors who have been in close dialogue—though not quite reciprocal, from the Kurdish perspective—with one another and often thought and imagined within similar frames and scopes.

The nationalist struggle does not only imply antagonistic and competing ethno-nationalist discourses but also is a constant contest for hegemony between diverse nationalisms and nationalist discourses of the same alleged nation, with different intentions, social and political forces and agendas. Thanks to shifts and changes in dominant groups and social and political actors, both Turkish and Kurdish nationalist discourses have been continuously re-formulated ever since they became fully present

(sometime around the end of the 19th century for the Turkish one and about two decades later in the Kurdish one). Like all nationalisms, in other words, the Kurdish and the Turkish ones, too, are not fixed, stable, and are open to ideological and political conversions and interventions. Put simply, although there is generally one dominant discourse in different politico-historical stages, for both cases, there have always been competing nationalist discourses. Thus, as will be seen as we proceed into chapters, in both nationalisms, ideological and political heterogeneity has always accompanied the claim of homogeneity and unitarity.

Umut Uzer states that despite moving away from a secular-Kemalist core towards a more Sunni Islam-oriented conception of national identity, in Turkish nationalism, none of the national strands are really weakened (cited in Al 102). Put differently, there are values and sides that were more resilient and dormant in the past but becoming more and more dominant and active now, like the religious one. In the last resort, however, Turkish nationalist discourses are still "a combination of various forms of Turkish nationalism where religion, Turkishness and territorial integrity of the state cross-breed with each other" (Al 103) and where one or two core elements are emphasised as a way of difference.[8] As both Tanıl Bora (2011) and Mesut Yeğen (2011) point out, another strand that has stood fast in Turkish nationalist discourses is the centrality of the state's Kurdish discourse, which continue to lead an increase in unsympathetic sentiments towards the expression of Kurdish identity and culture and even to the legitimation of anti-Kurdish

[8] Bora classifies five nationalist discourses in Turkey: the official nationalism or Atatürk nationalism, Kemalist nationalism or *ulusçuluk*, the Liberal 'Neo-Nationalism,' Pan-Turkist Radical Nationalism, and Nationalism in Islamism ("Nationalist Discourses in Turkey" 63-77). Umut Uzer, on the other hand, designates three typologies of Turkish nationalism: *territorial-civic*, *ethnic*, and *conservative* ("The Genealogy of Turkish Nationalism" 104). Similarly, some scholars, such as Martin van Bruinessen (1992), David McDowell (1996) and Hakan Yavuz (2009) have pointed to "three competing strands; secular, traditional and Islamic, in the constitution of Kurdish nationalism" (Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy* 176).

sentiments in larger society. In Bora's view, "[t]his banal nationalist discourse, which defines the Kurds as Barbarians while criminalizing them not only politically but also socially and ethnically, signifies the dangerous replacement of assimilationist optimism with a violent non-assimilationism" ("Nationalist Discourses in Turkey" 58).

In sum, the differences brought about by the existence of a Turkish nation-state and the ideological apparatuses in its service, and the majority and minority positions in the political sphere, are not decisive, and there are multiple similarities between the Turkish and Kurdish nationalist discourses. Any list of such similarities, I think, will include headings and characteristics of (i) synchronic and diachronic heterogeneity, (ii) politico-historical expediency and necessities, (iii) defensive and reactive nature, (iv) dual attendance to the past and the future, or being Janus faced, (v) successful naturalisation processes and accomplished construction of abstract and concrete national content, and (vi) corresponding concomitant discursive formations in major areas (historical, linguistic, literary, genderal, social, and the like). This is by no means an exhaustive list, and differences in modalities, functions, structures, and applications are present in these headings as well. We should note that not all Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms are similar and correspondent in these headings, rather the general patterns that are seen in both dominant and marginal discourses of each nationalisms are closely related and in dialogue.

II. Always Contextualize, Always Politicise: Jameson's Theoretical Model

Above all, given the reciprocal relationship between nationalism and modern literature, as discussed particularly in Anderson (1983) and Bhabha (1991), in modern Turkey, too, it is impossible to speak about one of these elements (Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms, languages, and literatures) without the other. This is why this study opted

for a dialectic and comparative perspective. This methodological move, however, should not mean that our dialectic and comparative frame manages fully to escape the problematics identified by Homi K. Bhabha as the "'strategy of containment' where the Other text is forever the exegetical horizon of difference, never the active agent of articulation" (31). Although the dialogic and dialectic relation between the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions tempts us to identify the nature of this relationship as interactional and interdependent, this appears to be a facile generalisation in many cases. In truth, the Turkish literary institution is more self-enclosed and less dependent on its Kurdish counterpart. Because of its political, social, and economic advantages, the Turkish literary institution has the upper hand in comparison with the Kurdish one. As Itamar Even-Zohar points out, "there is not one single literature which did not emerge through interference with a more established literature" (cited in Moretti 116), which is the case with the Kurdish literary institution. In Turkey, most Kurdish aspirants to *belles lettres* become acquainted with fictional writings through works either written in or translated into Turkish; therefore, the development of literature, especially of fiction in Kurdish, is profoundly and intrinsically connected to literature in Turkish. Political and economic hindrances, such as the inaccessibility of education in the Kurdish language and the official ban on writing and publishing in Kurdish, allowed no alternative. Thus, even though the oral literature in Kurdish is as strong and established as Turkish oral literature, the modern written Kurdish-language literature in Turkey has been influenced to a large extent by the Turkish literary institution. The obvious question at present is how to minimize the effects of the strategy of containment and to escape from invidious evaluations. To this end, my analysis will approach texts on their own terms before proceeding into any comparison.

Apart from the dialectic and interrelated links between the two literary institutions, the research is also aware that a free expression (journalistic, literary, or cultural) untrammeled by politics and state control has never been available to the writers from any literary institution in Turkey. Literary texts are markedly under social and political control mechanisms, official censorship, and self-censorship. Literary texts written in such contexts will therefore need a reading model that is particularly attentive to gaps and ideas and feelings that are expressed more symbolically, rather than explicitly. Further, due to long established, interconnected and powerful ties between literature and political, social, and historical contexts, which is ever stronger in the Turkish and Kurdish cases and in the case of political fiction, the suitable literary model for the research seemed to be the one that pays particular attention to these contexts and ties. Above all, a reading model, I think, should be self-critical, that is, aware of its own context, as well as its own limits and weaknesses in finding a balanced but critical view that is perceptive to both the individual and the collective, the local and the universal, the fictional and the real, and the literary and the political.

All considered, therefore, as I explain further below, I ground my analysis in Fredric Jameson's model in *The Political Unconscious* (1981) on account of its (i) *dialectical* (*i.e.,* comparative and relational), (ii) *symptomatic* (attentive to gaps, and absences), (iii) *multi-contextual* (responsive and equally sensitive to historical, political, and social contexts) and *processual* (approaching literary texts as processes rather than discrete and fixed events), and (iv) *meta-critical* (critical of its own premises and processes) approach.[9] This is not to say that the Jamesonian model and its application

[9] Jameson, unfortunately, is universally infamous for his paper, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1986), in which he falls prey to classical Hegelian dialectic, and argues that all third-world texts are necessarily allegorical for national histories, even when, or "perhaps particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (69). In one of the most famous literary retorts, Aijaz Ahmad details the blind spots and theoretical impasses in Jameson's argument. For reasons of space, we will not address this well-known polemic here, restricting

mitigate the ambivalent nature of interaction between Kurdish and Turkish literature or the incongruence of two literary institutions that, despite their close contexts and relation, have been formed and structured by different forces. The comparison of these literary institutions undeniably harbours some internal contestations, tensions, and even contradictions, which I find to be not only inescapable but also stimulating insofar as they raise further questions. The foregoing analyses, I hope, will suffice to indicate that all of these questions underscore the urgency and complexity of the Kurdish-Turkish question in Turkey.

The Jamesonian model merges two of the most influential master-narratives of all times, Marxism and psychoanalysis, and develops a theory able to "account for and link together social exploitation and psychic repression" (Schwab 87). To accomplish this, Jameson transfers pivotal concepts from other disciplines into a psychoanalytic register, borrowing from Lacan, then interprets these concepts through the lens of Althusserian Marxism. The importance of both Lacan and Althusser for the Jamesonian model extends beyond the limits of this introduction; what is important to emphasize here is their shared notion of the text and its interpretation. For both thinkers, the text has manifest and latent meanings, and the "difference" (distortions, absences, privations, transformations, and so forth) between these two meanings is attributed to ideology. In essence, the unconscious expresses itself through an innately two-fold (manifest-latent) form to mitigate ideological censoring. This is where psychoanalysis merges with (or into) Marxism. As an outcome, in a notoriously convoluted style, the Jamesonian model opens the floodgates of literary criticism to these two master-narratives. Althusser and Lacan thus serve as

ourselves instead to Ahmad's principal critiques. These are: Jameson's failure in justifying the third-world system, his ambiguity with respect to designation of the modes of production in all three worlds, and slippery use of the basic categories (Jameson uses the concept of "nation" and "collectivity" synonymously) (Ahmad 95-122).

mediators in Jameson's system, while both classical Freudianism and vulgar Marxism undergo substantial transformation. [10]

Lacanian psychoanalysis suits Jameson's theory in two important points, the *textual nature of the self* and the *theory of the Real*, both sealed by a Marxist stamp that ultimately functions as license for any deviation from the hermeneutic source. The Lacanian subjectivist theory diametrically opposes the conventional understanding of the subject as a natural phenomenon (*i.e.*, one that matures as a body and eventually achieves full growth) and instead claims it as "a textual site, constantly being written and rewritten, shifting in meaning and fragile" (Roberts 68). For a Marxist like Jameson, the text in question is being written and rewritten by political and historical determinants. Here Jameson conflates Lacan with Althusser. He reinterprets Lacan's concept of the "Real" as "history" in an Althusserian sense of causality: something cannot be directly perceived and understood, but only known through its symbolic and imaginary manifestations, *i.e.*, its effects.[11]

Althusser's influence on Jameson extends beyond this point, however. Jameson's theory of ideology is taken extensively from Althusser, for whom "ideology is a matter of the *lived* relation between men and their world, and this relation only appears as '*conscious*' on condition that it is *unconscious*" (233). In this definition, ideology appears

[10] Both Marxism and Freudianism have come under attack for their "naive semanticism," to put it in Jameson's words. Accordingly, these two major philosophies were criticised for their "naive belief that the true meanings of things can be easily determined through a proper understanding of the economic base or the psychological unconscious" (Roberts 71). Jameson's use of Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis is partly explained by Althusser's and Lacan's commitment to the multitude of meaning and the impossibility of attaining an unmediated and fixed meaning.

[11] Embedded in Jameson's daunting introduction "structural causality" is one of the basic concepts in Althusserian Marxism. According to Althusser, the classical division of theories of causality into a) linear/transitive/mechanical causality (which explains the effects of one element on another), and b) expressive/teleological causality (which describes the effect of the whole on the parts and sees the part as an 'expression' of the whole) is inadequate to explain social, political, and historical phenomena. His contribution of structural/complex causality introduces a new theory to the conventional two; it is based on the *presence* of the structure in its *effects*.

in an antithetically configured twofold systemic pattern: conscious-unconscious, simple-complex, manifest-latent. Althusser's "simultaneous emphasis on ideology as text, as a readable system of representations, and as a practice serving to reproduce structures of power and the dominant relations of power" is perhaps his most important contribution to the theory of ideology (Mohanty 74). This understanding of ideology also traces the link between Althusser's *For Marx* and Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*. In both works, "practices are socially determined in multiple ways, and they reveal how ideology is both necessarily 'textual' (that is, discursively mediated rather than simple, homogeneous, and self-evident) and tied to social and political institutions" (Mohanty 81). This is exactly where Jameson finds a passage from Althusser's theory of ideology to suit his model. The result of this passage, the political unconscious, is one of the most captivating concepts in literary theory, and it is to this concept and the model developed on it that we now turn.

The Jamesonian model sees Marxist literary interpretation as the supra-critical insight, the master code over all other interpretive systems. Jameson borrows aspects of other methods only to reinterpret them within a Marxist analytical framework. According to the Jamesonian model, the interpretation of a given text:

> [M]ust take place within three concentric frameworks, which mark a widening out of the sense of the social ground of a text through the notions, first, of political history, in the narrow sense of punctual events and a chronicle-like sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of a constitutive tension and struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various human social formations, from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us. (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 60)

Politics and literature, as well as the relationship between the two, reveal concentrically structured multilevel meanings. The first structure is composed of manifest meaning,

difference (the difference between the manifest and the latent), and latent meaning; the second structure contains the political, the social, and the historical level. The "concentric frameworks" stand for the three horizons of interpretation, but the entire logic of this ternary system is fundamentally structured on the textual cohabitation of the manifest and latent meanings. In other words, the Jamesonian interpretive method commences with and extends gradually from the manifest horizon of interpretation towards more latent ones. At the first level, the text is acknowledged as an imaginary solution to a social contradiction. Let us register two points about this level: first, in this narrowly political horizon, or level, "history is reduced to a series of punctual events and crises in time, to the diachronic agitation of the year-to-year, the chronicle-like annals of the rise and fall of political regimes and social fashions, and the passionate immediacy of struggles between historical individuals" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 62). Second, the critical task of this first phase is primarily one of thematisation. The subtitle for *The Political Unconscious—Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*—is to become a focal point of textual analysis in this phase, as the thematic symbolism of the text is worked out.

In the second semantic horizon, the text has already been turned into a cultural object, and interpretation extends to the social order. Here we find that the individual text has been "dialectically transformed" from the narrowly political-historical sense to be "reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual parole or utterance" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 61). Compared to the first horizon, where the critical task is one of understanding and interpreting the contradictory base thematisation, now the formal principle that needs to be brought into the fore of the semantic horizon is Bakhtin's concepts of "heteroglossia,"

i.e., the clash of voices (in terms of the axis of social-class factions).[12] Jameson describes these points as follows:

> Yet to rewrite the individual text, the individual cultural artifact, in terms of the antagonistic dialogue of class voices is to perform a rather different operation from the one we have ascribed in our first horizon. Now the individual text will be refocused as a *parole*, or individual utterance, of a vaster system, or langue, of class discourse. The individual text retains its formal structure as a symbolic act: yet the value and character of such symbolic action are now significantly modified and enlarged. On this rewriting, the individual utterance/text is to be grasped as a symbolic move in an essentially polemic and strategic ideological confrontation between the classes, and to describe it in these terms (or to reveal it in this form) demands a whole set of different instruments. (*The Political Unconscious* 70-71)

Apart from dialogism and heteroglossia, the new set of instruments we need for deciphering the text in accordance with its social meaning, in the present level, includes one of the key concepts of the model, *ideologeme*: "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 61). It is the dialogue of class struggle, the clash of status, in which two antagonistic discourses fight within the general unity of a shared code. According to Jameson, the ideologeme "as a construct must be susceptible to both a conceptual description and a narrative manifestation all at once" (*The Political Unconscious* 73). The concept of ideologeme provides a mediating line between the abstract nature of ideology, class value and the narrative materials. It is identified by its "amphibious formation, whose essential structural characteristic may be described as its possibility to manifest itself either as a pseudoidea" or as a proto-narrative (*The Political Unconscious* 73). As such, an ideologeme is the core of structures, sub-structures, and compositional relations

[12] The univocality of the first level is replaced by the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism and heteroglossia. The novel, as a model of society in Bakhtin's theory, is the platform of confrontations: of national language and social dialects, of singularity and communality, of hegemony and resistance, of consent and resentment, and so forth (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 263). What can in a preliminary way be formulated as a heterogeneous and charged pluralism in the Bakhtinian model registers in Jameson's Marxist model as the antagonistic dialogue between hegemonic discourse and subversive strategies, between dominant and subordinate.

(unities, divergences, oppositions, and differences); it is an always-already "constituted narrative paradigm that emits an ideological message" (*The Political Unconscious* 73).

The ultimate understanding of the text and history as a whole actualizes in the final level; here, after all other meanings have been exhausted, the owl of Minerva spreads her wings. This is the level of history, or what Althusser calls "absent cause" and Lacan calls "Real." Within this third semantic horizon, Jameson challenges historicism, which "is condemned to what Joan Copjec calls 'presentism' precisely because it fails to countenance a 'beyond' to historical reality (in Lacanian terms, the symbolic)" and the classical Marxist-Hegelian understanding of history as the unilinear evolution of a determined sequence of periods (Homer 82). Jameson's approach to history taps into that of Althusser, which attempts to free Marxist criticism from what Althusser and Jameson consider its emasculating impasses through new "scientific" concepts of complex contradiction, overdetermination, structural causality and *Darstellung* (representation).[13]

Darstellung denotes the structure in its *effects*; in other words, history is something that we know not as the thing-in-itself but through its effects. This means that

[13] Althusser tried to overcome classical Marxism's predicament, the reductionist relationship between the base and superstructure, with his concept of "structural causality." In this modality, the economy is just another level of structure that not only determines the other levels (juridical, social, political, and cultural) but at the same time is determined by them. Over-determination and the semi-autonomous levels of structure give Althusserian Marxism a way out from vulgar Marxism—and inspire Jameson's critique of Marxism as well. This, however, is not the only gift Althusserian Marxism gave to Jameson's Marxist critique. In *For Marx*, Althusser addresses one of the most challenging impasses of vulgar Marxism: the conviction of a strictly linear advancement of the mode of production (influenced by a Hegelian view of history), which has proved to be an epic failure of understanding so far. Althusser's solution to this problem is inspired by Mao, who argues that "Nothing in this world develops absolutely evenly," and Poulantzas, who claims that "every social formation or historically existing society has in fact consisted in the overlay and structural coexistence of several modes of production all at once, including vestiges and survivals of older modes of production" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 81). For Jameson, "[t]he temptation to classify texts according to the appropriate mode of production is thereby removed, since the texts emerge in a space in which we may expect them to be crisscrossed and intersected by a variety of impulses from contradictory modes of cultural production all at once" (*The Political Unconscious* 81). The synchronic unity of variety of levels (metasyncronicity), elements, determinants, and structures enables the Jamesonian model to duplicate the opportunities that structural causality opens for Marxist criticism. This approach could be compared to Raymond Williams' argument that the internal dynamic relation in a given culture is based on the coexistence of dominant, residual, and emergent modes of production.

history is not a text, since it can neither be narrated nor represented, and always need to be re-textualised out of the former textualisations. What emerges here is "a repertoire of devices," including those developed in previous levels. They are to be transcended, however, from the narrowly political and the social to the largest and deepest sense of the world, namely, history. To recapitulate the interpretive progress with an analogy from linguistic: starting from a single *speech* in the first semantic horizon and moving to the broader plane of *parole* in the second, the concentric frames end in the largest system, in *langue.*

Jameson's concept of the *ideology of form,* "that is, the symbolic messages transmitted to us by the coexistence of various sign systems which are themselves traces or anticipations of modes of production," determines the ultimate meaning of the text (*The Political Unconscious* 62). Beyond just the manifest contradiction or social antagonism of the previous horizons, in this level we should map out the underlying meaning of fictional modes; we should analyze the *content of form.* Apprehension of the form as the indicative of content—*i.e.,* indicative of the formal expressions of ideological messages and the repertoire of synchronic and diachronic mode of productions—is of a paramount importance in this level. According to Jameson, "to grasp such formal processes as sedimented content in their own right, as carrying ideological messages of their own, distinct from the ostensible or manifest content of the works," we should approach the "discontinuous and heterogeneous formal processes" (different literary genres, stylistic choices) as the latent content of a given text (*The Political Unconscious* 84).

Before addressing critiques of the Jamesonian model, let us recapitulate the three concentric horizons in a table:

concentric horizons	**interpretaive device**	**political unconscious**
political	thematisation	symbolic act
social	heteroglossia	ideologeme
Historical	generic tension	ideology of form

None of this should suggest, however, a naively enthusiastic endorsement of the Jamesonian model. The theory is not free of flaws, and it is crucial that we clarify at least its most prominent blind spots, which can be grouped into four main categories: (i) eclecticism, (ii) a constantly totalising approach, (iii) an exclusively academic nature, and (iv) the neglect of sexual politics.

It is universally acknowledged in literary criticism that Jameson borrows and interpolates different theories into a Marxist register. It is Terry Eagleton who provides the ammunition for the critique of this tendency with characteristic wit:

> The most uncharitable way of putting the point would be to say that his work resembles nothing quite so much as some great Californian supermarket of the mind, in which the latest flashily dressed commodities (Hjelmsev, Barthes, Deleuze, Foucault) sit stacked upon the shelves alongside some more tried and trusty household names (Hegel, Schelling, Croce, Freud), awaiting the moment when they will all be casually scooped into the Marxist basket. Alternatively, Jameson can be seen as an unrepentant bricoleur, reaching for Machereyan spanner here or Greimasian screwdriver there in his patient tinkering with the faulty text. ("Fredric Jameson" 17)

Eagleton's charge certainly contains some truth. We must, however, ask what is wrong with the use of an eclectic theory for complex phenomena, especially when decades of homogeneous theoretical endeavours have proved insufficient to the interpretive task. Eclecticism for eclecticism's sake is unwarranted, but an interpretive framework is not automatically more correct for having arisen in a single mind, within the "coherent" frame of a single approach.

Another general point of criticism is Jameson's totalising and generalising approach, which bears on his entire oeuvre. Evan Watkins argues that "the anomaly his career and reputation represent has to do more immediately with his refusing to assume, beyond the obligatory lip service required of all of us, the inexhaustible recesses of specificity" (17). Later on, however, Watkins attributes this quality to the predecessors Jameson privileges, and asserts that just like his theoretical fathers, Jameson, too, "seems driven by a desire to *over*generalize at the expense of ignoring irreducible contingencies of specific texts and cultural moments" (21). It is clear that Jameson does generalize, even habitually. These generalisations, however, usually concern the deductive process involved in the interpretation rather than overly generalised conclusions about the text. His manner of treating the act of interpretation is no more generalising than are any of the other interpretive methods. Besides, while generalisation may not be the appropriate way to deal with singularity and diversity, it captures the nature of text better than any of the alternatives do. Further, not unlike eclecticism, the charge of generalisation is a tired one in academia, thanks to a plethora of intellectuals eager to dismiss any theory they find eclectic or generalising.

As Deleuze wrote, "[n]o one has ever died from contradictions" (151), and indeed, the history of humanity is replete with contradiction between theory and practice. This brings us to another charge laid against Jameson's model: that his theory fails to connect to the real-world practice. This is at first surprising, for Jameson acknowledges the accuracy of Marx's widely known thesis that "[p]hilosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." Yet Jameson falls prey to this exact trap. Like Western Marxism in general, his theory suffers from a tightly sealed academic approach, "with its philosophical concerns at the expense of political action," in Eagleton's words (cited in Lesjak 28). The consequence of this preoccupation

with theory "is nothing less than the sopping of 'vital, political energies' and the reduction of Marxism to a form of academicism" (Lesjak 28). That is to say, for all of its concerns with structures of power, Jameson's model nevertheless lacks the ever-desirable integration of practicality.

The last point of criticism concerns Jameson's neglect of sexual politics. As Schwab points out:

> Any polarisation of the individual and the collective, the psychological and the political, or sexual and political economy tends to operate methodologically according to a logic of substitution, hierarchisation, and unilateral determination that simplifies the complex interaction between the spheres and the overdetermination of their respective modes of representation. (96)

The danger of such an approach is that it confines politics and history into parallel, rather than interacting, structures: "a procedure that, in turn, has to rely on simple analogies and homologies between the two [sexual and political economy] instead of the much more diverse and complex forms of interaction and overdeterminations" (Schwab 96). It is true that Jameson reads sexual symbolism as a latent expression of economic or political desires that should be historicised, as can be observed in his reading of Balzac's novels. It is also true that he deals with sexuality in isolation from social sphere. Sexuality as a problematic is either substituted with or transformed into an economic or political register, as if it is inherently an allegorical problem rather than a problem in itself. In reality, however, as Klaus Theweleit argues in *Male Fantasies*, "political, economic, and sexual fantasies are so intricately intertwined that one can understand each aspect only in connection with the others" (cited in Schwab 98). Jameson's shortcoming in this respect is an inclination for interpreting sexuality and its mode of production (including sexual politics, patriarchy, gender binary, and gender inequalities) as mere symbols for economic-political essences rather than as active partners of present state of economic-political affairs. Before I move to a brief introduction of my chapters, let me note that this

research by no means claims overcoming the shortcomings of Jamesonian model; nevertheless, I have done my best to reduce their impacts on my analyses.

III. Structure and Scope

Having read hundreds of novels in Turkish and around 100 novels in Kurmanji at a time when the total number of novels written in Kurmanji was no more than 500, I concluded that language, love, religion, and history have been the most prominent novelistic themes, either in both literary institutions or in one of them. These themes are particularly helpful for investigating some of the major issues that are central to both Turkish and Kurdish politics and literatures: nationalism and identity construction, the true essence of the Turkish or Kurdish society, the East and West binary, the woman question, modernisation, secularisation, and the like.

In ordering my chapters, I gave priority to the chapter on the politics of language because it served as an introduction to the lesser known Kurdish literature. I ordered the remaining three chapters to reflect the Jamesonian model, placing the chapter on the politics of love next, since it discussed the immediate political context, which is the first horizon of interpretation in the model. I followed this chapter with the one on the politics of religion and Pamuk's *Snow* because it emphasized Jameson's second horizon of interpretation, the clash of different ideological views. Because history is the ultimate context in the Jamesonian model, I placed the chapter on Tahir and Shemo, which investigates the politics of history, as the final chapter before the conclusion.

In the first chapter, then, I discuss the politics of language and language conflict in Kurdish and Turkish literature through an analysis of Hesenê Metê's novella *Êş*. Here, true to our theoretical model and methodology, I explore the main issues, arguments, and developments *vis-à-vis* the Turkish and Kurdish languages in Turkey. The chapter

consists of three main parts. In the first one, I focus on the Kurdish context, briefly introduce Metê and *Êş* and then move to the discussions that the text opens concerning the language conflict. Accordingly, after reviewing the history, main issues, and ramifications of the Kurdish language conflict in Turkey, I attend to the question of definition and borders of the Kurdish literary institution. This being done, in the second part, I explore the historical, political, and socio-cultural context in which the Turkish language conflict came about. Following this, in the last part, I summarise discussions and compare the Turkish and Kurdish contexts with regard to the language question.

In the second chapter, I discuss the politicisation of love in Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions through analyses of Esat Mahmut Karakurt's *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* and Mehmed Uzun's *Ronî Mîna Evînê Tarî Mîna Mirinê*, with a particular eye towards identity and gender politics. Towards this end, as required by our model, to contextualise texts and my analyses, after briefly introducing Karakurt and Uzun, their works, and short summaries of the novels in respective sections, I situate the two novels' love stories in the political history of modern Turkey. Here, I read the love stories narrated in the two novels as socially symbolic acts, and try to understand the reasons that made Uzun and Karakurt imagine such love stories and tell them in the ways they did. Thus, I analyse the political symbolism of love stories with particular attention to the social, cultural, and ethno-political underpinnings of gender roles in the novels. I then attempt to reveal the more universal and basic structures that conditioned Uzun's and Karakurt's understanding of love and made them so closely attuned to one another.

Chapter III, in which I focus on the question of religion in the Turkish and Kurdish contexts from both political and literary aspects, provides an analysis of one of the most globally well-known and critically acclaimed Turkish novels, Orhan Pamuk's *Kar*. Here, my aim is to explore the crisis of secularisation and the rise of Islamist politics and

literature in Turkey, paying particular attention to the Kurdish and Turkish religious actors' response to the Kurdish question. Thanks to *Snow*'s attention to the related principal questions, *viz.*, the women issue, the Kurdish question, the problematical processes of Westernisation, secularisation, and nationalism, and the strong authoritarianism and patriarchism that are built in the structures of the Turkish state and society, in this chapter, I attend to many aspects of the religion question in Turkey. First, focusing on Kurdish and Turkish religious intellectuals' response to the Kurdish imbroglio, I attempt to investigate the reasons for Kurdish writers' limited approach to the question of politics of religion in the Kurdish literary institution. Next, through Pamuk's novel and Jameson's concentric model, I introduce the socio-political and historical context in which the religion question has come to the fore. Here, I discuss the history of Turkish modernisation and secularisation, the rise of Turkish-Islamist movements, and the headscarf issue. Following this, in the consclusion, I compare the Turkish and Kurdish contexts regarding the politics of religion.

In Chapter IV, I analyse Ereb Shemo's *Dimdim* and Kemal Tahir's *Devlet Ana* within the scope of the politics of history, which influenced both the production and interpretation of the two works in their respective literary institutions. As in other chapters, after introducing the writers, texts, special contexts (particularly the context of Soviet Armenian Kurdish literature) and the literary institutions in respect of the main question, the politicisation of history, I attend to the historical and political contexts of stories, the politico-historical frame in which they were produced, and the historiography that influenced the understanding of history in these texts and which was, in turn, influenced by them. Through the analyses of Shemo's and Tahir's novels and in line with Hayden White's idea of history as a "narrative discourse" that is more imagined by social, political, and historical actors than simply found, I attempt to reveal the political and

ideological forces that brought about parallel discourses of history, antagonistic yet similarly defensive, reactive, and totalising discourses, in the Turkish and Kurdish contexts.

In my conclusion, I briefly discuss the principle questions that the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions have faced so far and are likely to face in the future. My main argument is that the destiny, character, power, and potential of the Turkish and Kurdish novels and literary institutions, in general, have been intrinsically bound to the history and development of democracy in Turkey, and will remain so in the future.

The word limit does not allow me to do a detailed literary review and discuss the sources and studies that I used while conducting my research. For the literary currents, themes, and periods that I attend throughout this thesis, I found the following works very helpful: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (The History of Turkish Literature in the 19th Century, 1949) is by far one of the most all-inclusive and inspiring books on the formation of the modern Turkish literature. Jale Parla's *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Kökleri* (Fathers and Sons: The Epistemological Roots of the Tanzimat Novel, 1990), Ahmet Evin's *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (1983), and Robert Finn's *The Early Turkish Novel 1872-1900* (1984) are some of the most helpful and prominent readings on the rise of the Turkish novel. The three volumes of Berna Moran's *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* (A Critical View of the Turkish Novel I, II, and III: 1983, 1990, and 1994) provide a more comprehensive outlook on the Turkish novel, offering impressive and outstanding critical analyses. In addition to these, the following studies provide useful information and insights on the development and characteristics of the Turkish novel: Celia J. Kerslake's "New Directions in the Turkish Novel" (2002), Murat Belge's *Genesis:"Büyük Ulusal Anlatı" ve Türklerin Kökeni* (Genesis: "Grand National Narrative" and the Roots of

Turks, 2009), Talât S. Halman's *Rapture and Revolution: Essays on Turkish Literature* (2007), A. Ömer Türkeş's various articles, and almost all chapters in Celia Kerslake et al.'s (eds.) *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century* (2010).

Although an outstanding literary criticism on modern Kurdish literature is emerging, readings on the rise of modern Kurdish prose and novels are limited in comparison to the Turkish case. In this respect, Christine Allison's various studies provide excellent insights, particularly into Kurdish oral literature and its importance in the formation of a modern literature (2010) and Soviet Kurmanji literature (2004 and 2013). For my analysis of the Kurdish literary institution and its borders, I found Clémence Scalbert-Yücel's works and discussions on the definition and autonomy of Kurdish literature (2011 and 2012) exceptionally helpful and inspiring. Similarly, Hashem Ahmedzadeh's introductory chapter in *Nation and Novel: A Study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse* (2003) offers rewarding readings on the development and principal characteristics of the Kurdish novel, as does Özlem Biçem Galip's *Imagining Kurdistan: Identity, Culture, and Society* (2015), a large-scale and comprehensive investigation into the identity construction and novelistic discourse based on the analysis of 100 novels in Kurmanji. Amir Hassanpour's monumental study *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan 1918-1985* (1992), as well as Ergin Öpengin's (2010 and 2014) and Farangis Ghaderi's (2015 and 2017) various articles provide noted scholarly analyses and discussions about the Kurdish language and literary historiography. Remezan Alan's comprehensive and masterly exploration into modern Kurdish literature in *Bendname: Li Ser Rûhê* Edebiyatekê (The Book of Couplets: On the Soul of a Literature, 2009), to my view, offers some of the most original and accomplished examples of critical analysis in the Kurdish language. With its thorough

and informed discussions as well as attention to detail, İbrahim Seydo Aydoğan's *Guman 2 & Wejêya Kurdî û Romana Kurdî* (Kurdish Literature and Kurdish Novel, 2014) has also been remarkably helpful.

This study, needless to say, draws from these works substantially, and in this sense, there is little originality in it. But it is also one of the first scholarly investigations into the relationship between the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions. In fact, to my best knowledge, apart from a small collection of articles by Servet Erdem, Ömer Faruk Yekdeş, Rûken Alp, and Ayhan Tek, which were brought together and edited by Laurent Mignon in a special issue of the literary magazine *Varlık* (September 2011), and a number of theses based on the comparison of two literary figures from Kurdish and Turkish literatures, such as Ömer Faruk Yekdeş's master's thesis (2008), no comparative study of this scale and scope has ever been conducted between the two literary institutions. Further, the use of *The Political Unconscious* as a theoretical frame and the Jamesonian model is new in literary analysis. My project offers new interpretations of well known fictional works, thus, I hope the reader will notice some originality in it, too. It also introduces many fictional texts from the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions that are less known not only among Turkish and Kurdish readers but also among non-Turkish and non-Kurdish readers. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Turkish and Kurmanji into English are mine.

Still, to my great regret, there are many missing pieces in the pictures of literary institutions I provide here. One such missing piece and shortcoming is that no text by a female author is selected as main text for analysis. This is partly due to the lack of texts suitable for comparisons and thematic and contextual scopes by female novelists in the Kurdish literary institution. Even though feminist voices have emerged in the Turkish literary institution from writers such as Adalet Ağaoğlu (b.1929), Sevim Burak (1931-

1983), Leyla Erbil (1931-2013), Tomris Uyar (1941-2003), Tezer Özlü (1942-1986), Latife Tekin (b.1957), Cihan Aktaş (b.1960), Halime Toros (b.1960), Aslı Erdoğan (b.1967) and many others, androcentricism still predominates. The novels written by these writers were not particularly suitable for discussing the main questions of the project, however, and other female authors who have produced more suitable texts, such as Halide Edip, fail, to my view, to develop a feminist critical view. Still, given that one of the objectives of my research is to challenge hegemonic and androcentric outlooks, this might strike the reader as a contradiction, and I did do my best to remedy the gender asymmetry seen in the portrayal of these literary institutions by including as many secondary texts by female authors as possible. Furthermore, as I hope the analyses show, it has been my primary concern to render more prominent critical voices and views of marginalised identities, an effort which, if successful, would ultimately make more space for women as well as other historically underrepresented groups.

One of the greatest difficulties I have faced throughout this project was attending to a wide array of topics, themes, issues, contexts, and texts while keeping to a word limit. There remain many issues I wanted to address or have addressed already in the longer version of this thesis (such as separate discussions on women's writing, comparative analysis, the development of novel genre in the Kurdish and Turkish languages, other fictional genres, and literary productions in Zazaki dialect of Kurdish); however, due to the word limit, I have not included those here. When eliminating some sections and subsections devoted to these issues, my main concern has been protecting the general structure, integrity, and coherence of the total text. Therefore, I ask the reader kindly to conceive of this as an unfinished project.

Quibbling about definitions and borders of questions, whether political or literary in nature, is quite an old custom in Turkey. Throughout my research, I did my best not to

follow that path. The reader, however, should keep in mind that all definitions, boundaries, and questions are fluid and processual. Thus, my definitions of the Kurdish and Turkish literatures, literary institutions, identities, currents, and the like should be reviewed as a well-intentioned attempt to make otherwise extremely shifting and blurred grounds a bit more tangible and accessible.

CHAPTER ONE

COMPELLED WRITERS, FOUND NATIONS:

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE

When the first Kurdish woman elected to the Turkish parliament, Leyla Zana, caused one of the biggest controversies in the Turkish parliament during the oath-taking ceremony in 1991, all she did, in fact, was to state "I have sworn this oath for the sake of brotherhood between the Turkish and the Kurdish people" (van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana" 107). Yet, she declared this in the Kurdish language while wearing a headband coloured red, green, and yellow, the colours that constitute the Kurdish "national" flag. The Ankara State Security Court convicted her in 1994 of being a member of the PKK, under Article 168/1 of the Turkish Penal Code, and Zana paid the price for being the first person to speak Kurdish in the parliament, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment (Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 113). Having subsequently been released in 2004, she spent more than 10 years in prison for uttering a word of peace in her mother tongue.

In the present chapter, I discuss the politics of language in the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions with a specific focus on the language conflicts in both Kurdish and Turkish contexts. To this end, true to our theoretical model and methodology, I explore the main issues, arguments, and developments in modern Turkey with respect to the Turkish and Kurdish languages. The chapter is structured in three parts. First, I analyse a text from the Kurdish literary institution and discuss the language question in the Kurdish context. Here, while conducting my analysis of the main text, Hesenê Metê's *Êş* (Pain, 1998), I provide a brief summary of the history of the Kurdish language conflict and the linguistic subjugation Kurdish people have been exposed to in Turkey. Next, as required by the analysis of the main text, I attend to the question of definition and borders of the

Kurdish literature on the bases of linguistic differentiation and the claim to autonomy. Then, in the second part, I discuss the historical, socio-cultural, and political aspects of the Turkish language conflict, give a quick rundown of the history of its development and its main ramifications. These being done, in the last part I summarise discussions and compare the two contexts.

As in the chapter on politics of religion, in the present chapter, too, there is only one main text under analysis. The reason for not having a text for investigation of the Turkish context, is because, as the foregoing analysis will show, the language question in the Turkish literary institution has never been present—at least in the manner and form in which it has affected Kurdish literature—in the Turkish fiction. Put differently, the language question and the politicisation of language in the context of the Turkish language and literary institution is comparatively minor an issue to be compared with a Kurdish text and context. Thus, in the Turkish context, I will contend with a succinct discussion on the history of Turkish language conflict and a brief rundown on some examples from the Turkish literary institution in which the language question, though present as a minor theme, is touched upon.

Jale Parla addresses the negative impacts of Turkish language reform on the canon construction, canonicity, and Turkish writers' stylistic choices and dictions in "The Wounded Tongue" (2008). From this point of view, it is undeniable that the promotion of one formal language (Republican Turkish) at the expense of another (Ottoman Turkish) is not entirely different from banning and criminalizing a language altogether, since both acts were determined by the same authoritarian, anti-democratic, and hegemonic structures of social engineering and both were aimed at producing ideological homogeneity and loyalty. The difference, however, is that there is no Turkish novel in which the Turkish language reform and its influences on larger society or on literati is

addressed in detail and as a topic. As such, Parla's argument and premises are slightly flawed, since she could not refer to a single such novel in her study. In short, the language issue has found little resonance in the Turkish novel whereas it created the Kurdish novel and has remained one of its main topics and motivating factors. In fact, if one were to pinpoint an overarching thematic framework for the modern literature in Kurdish, the language issue would undoubtedly be it.

There are further reasons that it would be unfair to compare the Kurdish and Turkish language issues, however. Turkish writers, it is true, faced some restrictions. But the censorship, control, and surveillance mechanisms—which for the majority of Turkish writers was not even an issue since they were themselves zealous supporters of the regime and language reform—is not the same as absolute criminalisation, negation, and banning. Literature in Turkish never halted because of the language policies, but literature in Kurdish did. To illustrate the severity of this ban, one need only imagine the Turkish literary field had the same ban been implemented there. There would remain no Sait Faik, no Sabahattin Ali, no Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, no Oğuz Atay, no Yusuf Atılgan, no Sevim Burak, no Leyla Erbil, no Adalet Ağaoğlu, and no Bilge Karasu! Such a scenario is rarely imagined in the Turkish case. From this perspective, the modern Turkish literary institution is also a slaughterhouse of unborn Kurdish writers and unwritten Kurdish texts.

The reasons for choosing *Êş* in the discussion of the politics of language are that Metê reflects the unavoidable political feature of the language in the Kurdish literary institution from a unique perspective and registers almost all important aspects of the Kurdish language question in relation to the Kurdish literary institution. Being at the core of the Kurdish literature, the Kurdish language question has served not only as the principal motive in the emergence of this institution, but at the same time as one of the fundamental factors that shaped its distinctive qualities and set its rules and boundaries.

In fact, the inconvenient truth about the Kurdish literature is that it is not a literature for the sake of literature, but for the sake of the language. In order to appreciate the importance of the language question in the Kurdish literary institution, it is unnecessary to search for particular examples—a reader can come across the disturbing, uneasy and haunting references to this question in even the most silent and irrelevant pieces. *Êş*, however, investigates this question in the specificity of the question of the boundaries of the Kurdish literature, as well as its socio-cultural, everyday political, educational, and economic ramifications and far-reaching implications that are seen in the majority of Kurdish writing.

I. Writing as a National Obligation: Hesenê Metê's *Êş*

Hesenê Metê was born in Ergani, a county of Diyarbakır, in 1957. He left his village at the age of 11 and lived in various cities throughout Turkey. Following the military coup in 1980, he left the country and moved throughout Iran, Iraq, and Syria for three years before finally immigrating to Sweden, where he lives to this day. Metê started to write in Kurdish in Sweden after taking language courses for three terms. In order to improve his Kurdish, he translated stories by Anton Chekhov as well as Alexander Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* (1988) and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Poor Folk* (1991) (Uzun, *Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî* 374). Publications of Metê's collected short stories include *Ardû* (Fireplace, a collection of Kurdish folktales, 1990), *Smirnoff* (1991), *Epîlog* (Epilogue, 1998), and *Pêsîrên Dayê* (*My Mother's Breasts*, 2013). His first novel, *Labîrenta Cinan* (The Labyrinth of Jinns, 1994) concerns the changes an idealist teacher undergoes in a village infamous for its lunatic dwellers. *Tofan* (The Flood, 2000) is a short novel, in which Metê retells the famous Kurdish love story, *Mem û Zîn*, from the perspective of the villain, Beko. Another novel, *Gotinen Gunehker* (Sinful Words, 2007), narrates the Devil's account of the conflict with God over the creation of Adam and Eve.

His last novel *Li Dêrê* (At the Church, 2011) is similar to *Tofan* and *Gotinen Gunehker* in stylistic and thematic features.

According to Lal Laleş, the Kurdish literature of immigration and exile has two main schools: *Hawar* (The Call) or *Şam Ekolü* (Damascus School) and *İsveç Ekolü* (Sweden School) (370). The Damascus School was the Kurdish literary movement that flourished in Syria, which formed around the literary magazines *Hawar* (1932-1935 and 1941-1943) and *Ronahî* (Light 1941-1945). Both magazines were founded by Celadet Alî Bedir Khan, known as the pioneer of modern Kurdish prose in the Kurmanji dialect (Malmisanij, *The Past and Present* 6). *Hawar* continued the missions of the early Kurdish periodicals in the late Ottoman period by providing the ground for intellectuals to get into contact with the Kurdish people, which played a crucial role in the development of modern prose. Hesenê Metê (along with Mehmed Uzun, Mahmûd Baksî, Rojen Barnas, Mustafa Aydogan, and Firat Cewerî) belongs to the second school, the Sweden School, and is celebrated for his ironic and plain style (Aydogan, *Guman 2 & Wejêya Kurdî* 297).

Hesenê Metê's *Êş* (Pain) is a story of an emigrant Kurdish literary man who is visited by his brother after living in Sweden for 16 years. The text is set in the mid 1990's and covers a short period of time in the protagonist's life. The hero, Darînê Daryo, is asked by his family and kinsmen to write at least one book in "the language of his home,"[14] *i.e.*, Kurdish. Darîn objects on the grounds that he is not a writer, but his brother cajoles him into writing by recounting his mother and father's last will and their tribesmen's plea for a book in Kurdish. Throughout his brother's stay, Darîn tries his best to write, but ultimately fails. Later we learn that his failure brings about both the rescinding of his mother's blessing as well as his father's death from shame. Towards the end of the story, he expresses the impossibility of writing, but also wishes that his story

[14] This is a common phrase used by the Kurds of Turkey to identify the Kurdish language—since its public use was strictly forbidden, the Kurdish language has been used only in the private space of home.

could be written. In the last chapter, a voice appears on the scene and promises to write this story. Darîn's only condition is that the story should always be read in "the language of home."

Darîn's story, in the manifest meaning, is reminiscent of an advertisement for a book club in the *Sunday Times* dated 8 June 1958: "Have you thought of what social standing it gives you and your family—having good books about the place? They put you a whole class up—in the eyes of your neighbors and business friends. You are 'well-read,' the sort of family that's a cut above the rest…for less than the price of a TV licence" (cited in Sinfield 29). Just like the target audience of this advertisement, Darîn's family, too, wishes to put themselves "a whole class up" in the eyes of other village families. When historicised, however, their wish leads to a more latent meaning which could be captured in the main objectives of Kurdish cultural nationalism, especially in the actual paucity of books in Kurdish, and the Kurdish language question in Turkey—though by no means restricted solely to Turkey. The political reasons for this scarcity, together with the desire to eliminate it, constitute the real context of the story. When interpreted in the first level, Metê's text finds its narrowly political and historical meaning in the political reasons for this scarcity, together with the desire to eliminate it.

At the narrowly political level, then, *Êş* is a symbolic act which aims to eliminate the grave impacts of the state's language policy on the Kurdish language in Turkey. The relentless emotional pressure of Darîn's family to push him into writing a book in Kurdish, from this perspective, is an imaginary resolution to the scarcity of the written material in Kurdish and to the anxiety and pressure that come from feeling behind in the race of cultural modernity due to the language ban. In order to identify the real contradiction to which *Êş* is presented as a symbolic solution, we need briefly to review the history of the Kurdish language in the last century and how the Kurdish language

issue turned into one of the most resilient political and cultural questions in modern Turkey. To these, we now turn.

Prior to 1898, when the first Kurdish journal was published (*Kurdistan*, by Mikdat Midhat Bedir Khan and later by his brother Abdurrahman Bedir Khan), the Kurdish language, like many neighbouring languages, was largely unwritten, especially in prose and profane subjects. As Hashem Ahmadzadeh points out, "[e]ven during the 20th century, despite the emergence of Kurdish journalism and literary prose, Kurdish poetry has, both qualitatively and quantitatively, had the upper hand" (*Nation and Novel* 143). The only remaining pre-20th-century prosaic texts are a small number of religious texts, some translations of the Bible, and two works by Mele Mehmudê Bazidî: one, a collection of folk tales called *Cami'ê Risale û Hikayeyan* (The Book of Letters and Stories), and the other, a short adaptation of Ehmedê Khani's *Mem û Zîn*, in narrative fiction (Yekdeş and Erdem 335, Hassanpour 81). When mass publications in Kurdish started to appear in the late Ottoman era, this dearth of books in the Kurdish language was a major concern—as was the low level of literacy among Kurds. The urgent need to eliminate this "shame," as it was called by the Kurdish intellectuals of the time, was emphasised in these new periodicals, with writers suggesting ways to increase rates of both Kurdish literacy and publication.[15]

This issue confronted by the periodicals paved the way, however belatedly, for the rise of Kurdish cultural nationalism in the age of the burgeoning nationalisms. This particular brand of Kurdish nationalism was (and still is) marked by several defining

[15] We have no official literacy figures for that time, yet according to a 1927 census, as Hassanpour lists, the literacy rate in seven selected Kurdish provinces of Turkey (Bayazit, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkâri, Mardin, Siirt, and Van, in total 865,746 persons of all ages) the average stood at around 2.2% (442). Note that the rate in the same year in Istanbul was 39.4%, 10 % in Ankara and stood at an average of 8.1% for the whole country (Hassanpour 442).

features: (i) It did not emerge naturally but was articulated as a response to other nationalist movements. (ii) It incorporated both intellectual and political activism. (iii) Because it emerged late on the scene relative to other nationalist movements (in terms of institutionalisation, modernisation, technological advancement, and social and economic development), it was preoccupied with the necessity to play catch-up in terms of educational development. Thus, the question of how to raise the overall level of education among the Kurds and teach them their history, literature, and so forth were its main concerns. All these concerns and the agitated emergency state had come to a halt, however, following the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the subsequent prohibition of cultural and literary activities in languages other than Turkish.[16] Thus, from the 1920's and lasting through until the early 1990's, writing, publishing, educating and even speaking in Kurdish were considered political crimes in Turkey. This policy is referred to as *linguicide* or linguistic genocide [*dilkırım* or *dilsel jenosid*, in Turkish], that is the deliberate extermination of a language, by many scholars such as Amir Hassanpour (1992), Nesrin Uçarlar (2009), Ergin Öpengin (2010), Cuma Çiçek (2010), Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (2012), among others.[17] Darîn's story is not explicitly set in this political context, but a symptomatic reading of the text reveals that it is framed by this politico-

[16] As scholars such as Yeğen (2006), Uçarlar (2009), and Sadoğlu (2010) point out in their works, it was evident from the 1924 Constitution that the nation-state and Republican cadre were already intolerant of other languages, particularly other languages spoken by Muslim communities. Although the linguistic rights of non-Muslim communities were guaranteed by the Lausanne Treaty (1923), they, too, suffered from non-democratic regulations considerably. For further reading see Cagaptay 24-32.

[17] The term was defined by the Special Committee on Linguicide, in their presentation to the United Nations as a part of the International Year for Human Rights in 1968, as: "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or part or to prevent the natural development of a language or dialect […] a) killing members of a community speaking a respective language or dialect (genocide); b) imposing repressive measures intended to prevent the natural, organic development of a language or dialect; c) forcibly inflicting on a bilingual community conditions of cultural development calculated to transform it into a unilingual group; d) against the will of an ethno-lingual group denying the right of a language to be taught in public schools, to be used in mass media (press, radio, television, *etc.*); e) against the demand of an ethno-lingual group refusing moral and material support for its cultural endeavours and language maintenance efforts." (Hassanpour 145-46). Referring to this list, Hassanpour and many other scholars maintain that the Kurdish case in Turkey provides quite sufficient evidence to define it as a linguicide (146).

historical context, and without specific attention to this context any reading of *Êş* will remain superficial and flawed.

Since the language was the main marker of differentiation between the Turkish and Kurdish human resources that transferred to the Turkish Republic, and since a cultural and linguistic unity was seen as imperative for a strong nation state by the Kemalist cadre, the elimination of other ethnic, cultural and linguistic expressions became one of the first internal political moves of the nation-building project (Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 105). Kurds, being the most populous non-Turkish ethno-linguistic group, in such conjuncture, constituted the biggest challenge for Republican national-social engineering. Thus, the language of Kurds, Kurdish, which was seen as the backbone of their cultural identity, became the main domain for the application for Republican Kurdish policy which adopted various strategies and outlooks throughout the 20th century, including the identification of Kurdish language as a spoiled and disordered old Turkic dialect and its debasement and denial as a language. Yet, the main Republican Kemalist response to the Kurdish language has been prohibiting and equating its usage (writing, publishing, broadcasting, and speaking in the public sphere) with political and illegal activities, terrorism and separatism.

As discussed in many works, such as Hassanpour (1992) and Zeydanlıoğlu (2008), a missionary imagination (from resettlement arrangements and boarding schools to promoting inter-ethnic marriages between Kurdish women and Turkish men) has always framed the main scope for Turkish nationalist ideologues, intellectuals and politicians' when addressing the Kurdish question and Kurdish language conflict. After giving a brief rundown on Republican assimilation policies in relation to the Kurdish

language, changing of settlement names,[18] broadcasting propaganda, and so forth, Zeydanlığlu maintains that "[i]ronically, such crude and oppressive assimilationist strategies and coercive practices often had the opposite effect of raising ethnic awareness among many Kurds," which brought about after decades of silence, in the 1970s, a reawakening of the Kurdish movement and opposition ("Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 108). Until that time however, in more than 50 years in modern Turkey, there had been almost no literary activity in Kurdish at all.[19] As a matter of fact, the number of books published in Turkey in Kurdish (including religious books, dictionaries, and alphabet booklets) between 1923 and 1980, as Mehmet Tayfun, alias M. Malmisanij, a prominent Kurdish scholar and linguist, noted, was only 16 (Malmisanij, *The Past and Present* 21-22).[20]

The systematic repression of the Kurdish language further exacerbated following the 1980 military coup. Hunting, torturing, and exterminating all dissident actors and parties, particularly Kurdish and communist ones, became the official agenda of the junta

[18] In 1959, Law No. 7267 stipulated that "village names that are not Turkish and give rise to confusion are to be changed in the shortest possible time by the Interior Ministry after receiving the opinion of the Provincial Permanent Committee" (cited in Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 107).

[19] Çiçek lists six main factors that helped Kurdish language to survive and enhance during these decades of linguicide: (i) Celadet Bedir Khan and the Hawar School in Syria, (ii) Kurdish *madrasa*s in Kurdish provinces, (iii) Kurdish music and *dengbej*s, (iv) Yerevan and Baghdad radio broadcasting in Kurdish, (v) relatively liberal intervals between 1960 and 1980 when Kurdish publication was possible, and (vii) the flourishing of a Kurdish diaspora in Europe after the 1980s (Çiçek, *Zimanek Çima tê Qedexekirin* 15). One can surely add the international Kurdish satellite TV station MED-TV, which became one of the very first platforms on which Kurdish population get the chance to finally imagine itself as a community, watching and hearing perhaps for the first time their own culture and language on screen. The effectiveness of MED-TV has led a Turkish official to claim that "MED-TV threatens the security of this nation more than the guerrilla attacks of the PKK [Kurdistan Worker's Party]" (Yavuz, "A preamble to the Kurdish Question" 15). Hakan Yavuz aptly puts the importance of MED-TV when he states that "with MED-TV, one can argue that the Kurds are the first satellite nation: they do not have a seat in the United Nations, but they do have an air frequency in the sky" ("A preamble to the Kurdish Question" 15).

[20] True, the situation has dramatically changed since the regulations were altered and Kurdish publication became *not necessarily illegal*, yet, the politico-juridical instability and arbitrary nature that has always dominated the democratic framework in Turkey has never treated the Kurdish language and its literary publications on an equal footing with their Turkish equivalents.

administration (Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 109). During this period, in the early 1980s, the notorious Diyarbakır Military Prison became a concentration camp where Kurdish and leftist activists were collected, tortured, maimed, and killed. Above the entrance of the prison, a sign was hung ordering inmates to "Speak Turkish, speak it a lot" [*Türkçe konuş, çok konuş*] (Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 109). Torture and the de-humanisation process, as in many such camps, included symbolic violence towards the victims' language, Kurdish. One of the most referenced stories of this period, that of Kamber Ateş, an imprisoned Kurdish activist and his mother, has become the epitome of Kurdish suffering under the Turkish-state's Kurdish language ban. Accordingly, Ateş is visited by his mother who cannot speak Turkish and thus is not allowed to talk to her son unless she speaks Turkish (Sümbüloğlu 10-11).[21]

Following the electoral victory of the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, ANAP), led by Turgut Özal, in 1983, despite strong Kemalist and military opposition, Turkey entered a new decade of liberal economic and cultural reforms. The repealing of the law that prohibited writing and publishing in the Kurdish language (Law 2932) was a major step, although the use of Kurdish for non-political purposes was now largely tolerated and no longer illegal, its use for educational, political, and broadcasting purposes was still strictly prohibited by law (Kirişci and Winrow 137; Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 111). Nevertheless, the EU harmonisation process that gathered momentum towards the end of the 1990s, forced Turkish officials to introduce a series of *de facto* reforms, albeit reluctantly, and to grant a minimum amount of leeway to Kurdish intellectual and political activists. As many scholars like Uçarlar

[21] For the complete story, see Sümbüloğlu 9-15.

(2009), Öpengin (2010), and Zeydanlıoğlu (2012) point out, however, the rather slow and gradual improvements in the realm of freedom of expression and publication in Kurdish have always been coupled with contradictory prosecutions and restrictions. The reforms, that is to say, were not intended to open a firm democratic page in the state affairs with the Kurdish population and language.

In conformity with the *Turkish nationalist and conservative democracy*, *viz.*, compromising between the Turkish nationalist, militarist, and Kemalist feelings and democratic improvements, that is checking democratic regulations through balances of counter-democratic practices and policies and thus restraining democratic moves from upsetting the *status quo*, the very day on which the language ban on Kurdish had been repealed (in 1991), the notorious Anti-Terror Law 3713 [*Terörle Mücadele Kanunu 3713*] was also passed.[22] In other words, despite all regulations and improvements which have now come to a halt after the EU harmonisation process was put on hold by the AKP, in the eyes of Turkish authorities, Turkish-Islamist nationalists, Kemalist elites, and the military, the Kurdish language continues to hold its position as a principal political incendiary, a potential threat to the unity and indivisibility of the nation-state, and a frustrating failure of Turkish nationalist and Kemalist social engineering (Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 120).

In such a new context, in which an allegedly new pattern of relationship between the state and the Kurdish language has developed, instead of discussing the Kurdish language question within the scope of constitutionally and legislatively secured collective

[22] The law "defined terrorism so vaguely that not only were the PKK directly targeted by this legislation but also anyone involved in the promotion of Kurdish language or culture" (Zeydanlıoğlu, "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" 111-12). Anyone believed to engage in propaganda that aims to destroy Turkish national unity and integrity, or assault Turkishness and Turkish national values, according to the Act, would be prosecuted–something almost impossible to circumvent given the immense vulnerability of Turkish nationalist and Kemalist pride. Not surprisingly, numerous Kurdish intellectuals, activists, writers, and politicians have been charged with acting against the law ever since.

rights, the discussions are intentionally pushed and kept within the framework of toleration and individual choices. As Çiçek aptly points out, a new "cultural administration" that accompanies the long dominant "security administration" in the region, has now become the new Kurdish language policy ("Bireysel Haklar" 17). The Turkish state and government, according to Çiçek, while checking and balancing its Kurdish politics (considering its stake in the wider region of the Middle East and its Kurdish inhabited and governed areas, Northern Iraqi Kurdistan and Rojava) has been maintaining the assimilative language politics, albeit slowing it down, and trying ever hard to dismiss the gravity of the Kurdish question and keep it at a sustainable level—note that it is not Kurds, or the Kurdish language now that is degraded but the Kurdish question ("Bireysel Haklar" 17). Put differently, the frame and scope of democracy and human rights is once again replaced by security and integrity concerns.[23] And in fact, Turkey even when it inaugurated the Kurdish speaking state channel, did not leave its tolerance-oriented language rights politics for a promotion-oriented one.

Nevertheless, the long decades of denial, ban, degradation, and assimilation have turned a majority of the Kurdish population in Turkey into bilingual speakers. This bilingualism, however, "does not refer to a standard and homogeneous level of linguistic capacity and skills in both languages since as a result of the lack of a public service and education[24] with a constructive perspective, a majority of this bilingual community is

[23] It appears that the Turkish-Islamist government of the AKP, like its Kemalist, central-right, and populist predecessors, did not aim at improving Turkish democracy as such, but only paid lip service to the EU and Kurdish demands. This was already clear when, then PM, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, responded to the Diyarbakır Bar President Sezgin Tanrıkulu's suggestion for opening schools and universities that teach in mother-tongues, with "There are not only Kurdish citizens in this country. There are Circassians, the Laz. How about when others demand that, too?" [Sadece Kürt kökenli vatandaşlar yok. Çerkez, Lazlar var. Başkaları isteyince ne olacak?] (cited in Çiçek, "Bireysel Haklar" 18). Erdoğan's words suggest that the Kurdish language question, and the Kurdish question in general, is firstly and foremostly a democracy question and that the AKP never aimed to finish the structures that brought about this question.

[24] The language of education is one of the main sources of dispute and adds to the complexity of the Kurdish question. The lack of formal education in the Kurdish language and a monolithic and compulsory schooling system based on official language forces families to adopt the official language and culture in order to

actually diglossic" [bilingualism with diglossia] (Öpengin 29).[25] In fact, Öpengin correctly notes that due to the lack of education in the Kurdish language and the limited Kurdish that parents are able to transfer their children (not standardised, not properly cultivated, lacking academic expressions and vocabulary, and so forth), most Kurds, in Dorian's (1980) conceptualisation, are *semi-speakers*, whose language use is filled with easily detectable mistakes and lacking in fluency (Öpengin 33). On the other hand, Öpengin argues that a purist (fluent, academic, and purely Kurdish) language policy that has been dominating Kurdish media, literature, and publication not only hamper the communicational capacity of the language but also causes the language community to develop a linguistic insecurity towards its own native language, and thus turn towards the formal language that he/she was educated in (33).

Let us end with a quick rundown of the prominent points and headings (problems, alternative outlooks, and resolutions) to the Kurdish language question in Turkey today: First of all, as Çiçek aptly points out, all Kurdish activists and parties (Islamist, Marxist, ultra-nationalist, pro-AKP, and others) agree on Kurdish linguistic and educational rights, that is to say, there is no conflict on the Kurdish front on the language issue (*Zimanek*

compete for the economic, cultural, and political capital offered solely in the prestigious official language (Article II of the 1948 UN ICPPC; Uçarlar 147-48). The outcome of this is "'submersion education,' which also leads to 'intellectual genocide'–studies prove that the success of children who have the education in the medium of dominant language is less than the children who are taught through their mother tongue" (Uçarlar 147-48). In fact, it is no surprise that Kurdish cities chronically score the lowest on university entrance exams and other exams at the national level. Aside from the economic under-development of the Kurdish region, and some other socio-cultural reasons (the high rates of fertility, child labour, domestic violence, and the conservative and patriarchist reluctance towards education of girls and young women) many scholars point the "submersion education" as one of the main reasons for this.

[25] Diglossia generally refers to the use of two varieties of the same language (a higher or more prestigious register and a lower register) in which each variety has distinctive spheres of use. Accordingly, the high or prestigious variety is used in more formal spheres like education, public service, business, literature, broadcast, *etc.* while the low one is used in informal contexts, generally at home and private life. Yet, in some contexts diglossia might refer to two distinctive languages structured as high and low, used in different spheres by the same community. In the Kurdish diglossia, the high (prestigious and official) language is not the mother tongue but acquired through formal education and the low language (native and informal) is confined to the private sphere, banned or unrecognised.

Çima tê Qedexekirin 28). In fact, even the PKK, whose Kurdish language policy was criticised at first,[26] and the Kurdish Hezbollah, the two antagonist Kurdish forces, are in agreement in this matter. Second, due to reasons discussed above, as Öpengin asserts, at this conjuncture, the Kurdish that is used by the media, publications, and literature, from a practical and rational perspective, has no option but to be overarching and inclusive rather than purist (33), since a bright future for the Kurdish language without a state of its own, a true democracy, and constitutionally secured rights, heavily depends on forming an urban and educated Kurdish speaking society who has its own Internet, media, academy, science and technology, business, and the like (Öpengin 34). I also argue that, Kurdish political and intellectual activists and parties need to think beyond the frame of 19th-century nationalism and cultural nationalism, and take the current situation and conditions of the Kurdish case [the mobility and displacement of the population, the ever growing Kurdish diaspora and Kurdish population dispersals in Turkey, new Kurdish autonomies and the possibility of independent Kurdish states in Iraq and Rojava, and many others] into account when engaging with the language issue. As a result of decades lasting politics of resettlement and displacement, the destructive conflict between the PKK and state forces, village and environmental destructions, and economic reasons,

[26] There are many discussions within Kurdish circles on the PKK's failure at initiating an explicit Kurdish language policy and the organisation's use of Turkish for communication (Uçarlar 214-217). Cemil Gündoğan contends that: "There was no opportunity to make politics principally devoted to the language because a great part of the people that constitute the [Kurdish] movements were not able to conduct intellectual activity in their own language; […] even if those who speak Kurmanji and Zazaki had been competent enough [to do so], they would have faced with the same question, namely they would have needed a common language and that language would have not been any one other than Turkish that everybody had learnt at school…" (cited in Uçarlar 216). This issue has found its best expression in a two-volume novel written by Hesen Huseyîn Denîz, *Hêvî Her Dem Heye* (There is Always Hope; volume I, 2008 and volume II, 2009). The novel tells the story of a wounded Kurdish guerrilla who has taken refuge in a cave and reflecting on his life and struggle as a PKK guerrilla and the Kurdish question while awaiting help. At a point in the novel, when he gives up on being saved by his comrades he decides to write his report (it is a tradition within the organisation, the PKK guerrillas always write reports to inform their leaders and comrades) to explain how he came to be-injured and his subsequent actions. Without thinking any further he begins to write his report in Kurdish yet remembers that the language used in this sort of reports is usually Turkish. He cannot decide whether to write the report in Kurdish or Turkish (Denîz 112).

numerous waves of Kurdish migration to big cities across Turkey and Europe have changed the nature of the Kurdish question dramatically. True, it is the same question of democracy and human rights, but a much more complicated and borderless one now.

However, a nationalist scope that tends to discuss the issue with arguments, terms and vocabularies of a 19th-century cultural nationalist is still dominant among Kurdish intellectuals and writers. In the age of the Internet, immense international mobility, growing diasporas, and the *post-truth,* the Kurdish political and intellectual actors' insistence in framing the Kurdish language question as solely a political matter hinder Kurdish readers, critics, and scholars to focus on the practical, ethical, socio-cultural, linguistic, economic, diasporic, and individual factors, variables, perspectives, and determiners properly. One of the most visible impacts of such outlook appears in the discussions on the linguistic unity. A sweeping majority of Kurdish intellectuals and literati sees "the monopoly of the dominant dialect of the Kurdish language as a prerequisite for linguistic unity and the survival of the Kurdish language, a state which can be cultivated only by a political power." (Uçarlar 208). Although an effort to preserve a "democratic stance" and acknowledgement of the importance of different dialects is also observable, nevertheless, a linguistic unity under state power and protection is still regarded as the only guarantee of Kurdish "national" unity (Uçarlar 208). As Uçarlar correctly reminds us, an outlook that links the rights and preservation of the language to power, and the state power especially, is quite prone to turn into another hegemonic power and create its own other. "In this respect, this approach is inadequate to lead a transformative resistance, which is the only way that speakers of the Kurdish language can be truly emancipated" (Uçarlar 208).

The long standing language degradation, denial, and derogation process has brought about the *satellisation* or *peripheralisation* of the Kurdish language in the eyes

of its own users (Öpengin 32). This is the outcome of a long and complex process in which the state and its ideological instruments, particularly education, civil service, and media have played a great part. In many studies minority language derogation is linked with the triumph of universalism, in which a national language is legitimised and institutionalised not only within national borders but internationally, and the languages of minority groups are ultimately associated with resisting ethnic identities, instabilities and ethno-religious tensions, tradition, obsolesce, and many other remnants of pre-modern phenomena (May 6).[27]

The main strategy of *peripheralisation* of the languages of minority groups, however, is through what Pierre Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence" and the accumulation, distribution, and exchange of linguistic (thus cultural and educational) capital. Accordingly, linguistic capital describes the "value" given to one's linguistic habitus, *i.e.*, individual differences (which are only articulations of class, economic, social, cultural, educational, and political capital) in practical linguistic competence, in a particular linguistic market, *viz.*, the civic culture of the nation-state, in which some linguistic habitus valuable than others (May 164). This brings about a market structure in which individuals will be granted different amounts of linguistic capital in conformity with their linguistic competence and ability to meet the market criteria and requisites (May 164-65). Note that the distribution of a linguistic capital is intrinsically linked with the distribution of all types of capital, and this ultimately determines the position and value of the individual in society (Thompson 18).

> Bourdieu argues here that symbolic violence occurs when a particular (linguistic) habitus, along with the hierarchical relations of power in which

[27] These associations are primarily affected by the pejorative perception of ethnicity and its alleged link with primitive, particularistic, and tribal creeds *vis-à-vis* the socio-cultural and economic favourableness of nation-state as universal, modern, advanced, and anti-particularistic formations (May 11).

> it is embedded, is 'misrecognised' (méconnaissance) as legitimate and tacitly accepted—*even by those who do not have access to it*—as a 'natural' rather than a socially and politically constructed phenomenon. (May 164-65).

Apart from its civic, political, and legal implications and functioning, linguistic habitus is decidedly bounded by the practical, that is to say, the linguistic capital is distributed, accumulated, and exchanged on the bases of pronunciation, diction, proper formal usage, grammar, vocabulary range, and the like—in short, a whole set of differentiating linguistic features that are acted out as either value increasing or decreasing. Bourdieu calls this the "re-translation of a system of social differences" (54). From this perspective, a Kurd's speaking of Turkish has probably worked as a value-increasing socio-symbolic act in few cases, only when he/she speaks just like a Turkish gentleman or lady, but in the majority of cases, it worked in adverse ways and became a stigma of his/her Kurdish identity. In the latter case, the Kurdish man or woman cannot hope to gain any *profit of distinction* that is produced by an accumulated linguistic (thus social, cultural, and economic) capital. This was emphasised by Frantz Fanon long ago in the colonial context, as follows:

> The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter—that is, he will come closer to being a real human being—in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language. […] A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power. Paul Valery knew this, for he called language "the god gone astray in the flesh." (18)

All this brought about a two-faced role to education in almost all minority contexts, including Kurdish. Since education in mother tongue is mostly unavailable or forbidden, the members of minority language groups have no other chance than the education in the language of the majority, *viz.*, official/prestigious/dominant language, in order to develop a linguistic habitus that enable them to accumulate linguistic capital and thus help them to cope with or annihilate pre-existing social differences and inequalities.

Yet, as Stephen May and many other scholars have emphasised, education and the language that is legitimised through education, are the most effective weapons of the battle for nationhood, and its subsequent process of establishing, maintaining, and reproducing the relations of power and domination between majority and minority groups, their languages and cultures (132). As Bourdieu would put it, formal education and official language are the main instruments of "the formation and re-formation of mental structures," national mental structures (47-48).

The literary and fictional consequences of this long-lasting Kurdish language conflict is an immense corpus of texts focusing on the politics of language, and dealing with the traumatic effects, sufferings, ironies, and comic outcomes. In fact, it can be argued that the most powerful and differentiating aspect of the Kurdish literary institution is its particular attention to the language conflict. From the very first examples of modern Kurmanji fiction, the stories of the Hawar School, to the most recent accomplishments of the Kurdish literary institution, such as Ciwanmerd Kulek's collection of short stories *Çar Yek* (The Four Sole Stories, 2015), Kurdish writers have been particularly successful at the literary expressions of the language question. Narrative devices like allegory, parody, and irony appear to be the principle literary modes and forms for the expression of this question.

Confronting this debate, arguably one of the finest achievements has been recorded by Xurşîd Mîrzengî, with his new novel *Yankesiciyim Efendim* (I Am a Pickpocket, Sir, 2015). The novel is written in a language that is a mix of Kurmanji and Turkish, particularly spoken in Diyarbakır, and has a narrative structure similar to *Decameron*. In Mirzengi's tale, a group of Kurds that have been arrested in a ward, among whom there are political activists, thieves, and those erroneously or randomly arrested, come together and the two pickpockets tell stories in exchange for cigarettes. Their stories

highlight the tragic and comic situations Kurdish people find themselves in due to the language ban. The principle success of the novel, thus, is the parodic, ironic, and sarcastic outlook Mîrzengî adopts to address the Kurdish language conflict. The marginal language choice, limiting potential readers solely to Kurds living in Turkey, reflects the Kurdish diglossia and the use of comic relief for the solemnity of the Kurdish language question is Mîrzengî's conceit in *Yankesiciyim Efendim*. The novel, from this perspective, opens a new horizon to the Kurdish literary institution in relation to the Kurdish language question.[28]

Despite all the improvements and developments discussed above and a new generation of writers whose outlook to the language question has moved beyond the scope of trauma, linguicide, and collective suffering, in the domain of politics of language, an enduring theme of binary between the pen and the sword is still dominating the Kurdish literary institution. This theme of pen and sword was first seen in Khani's classical poetry and later in one of the first modern and national Kurdish poets, Haji Qadir Koyi, and it has been revisited and used by many writers and poets throughout the 20th century. The theme reappears in one of the latest Kurmanji novels, Mihemed Şarman's *Kêmber* (The Barren, 2015), through an allusion to Celadet Bedir Khan's story "Gazinda Xencera Min" (The Grievance of My Dagger) which was published in *Hawar* magazine (issue 12 in November 27, 1932). In Celadet Bedir Khan's story, a Kurdish writer, possibly Celadet Bedir Khan himself, is being reprimanded by his dagger for having forgotten all about it. The writer tells the dagger that in following Khani's advice he dedicated his life to writing in Kurdish and consequently the Kurdish language has many new books and therefore

[28] The same comic style is used in another story collection by Selahattin Bulut, *Bihuşta Lal* (The Mute Paradise, 2006). Bulut, too, masterfully approaches and reflects the language conflict through the double lens of the comic and tragic.

will not disappear. The dagger tells the writer that if it was not for him (the dagger) nothing would have been won, both Kurds and the Kurdish language would have long vanished. The dagger thus advises: "So, know my value, do not forget me, do not leave me, and do not sharpen your pen with me, cut your enemy's rib with me!" (44).[29]

In Şarman's novel a new word that applies the Kurdish writers perfectly, is created: "*xençernûs*," meaning 'those who write with the dagger' ["Kurds refer to themselves as Xençernûs;" Şarman 293]. Şarman's neologism is perhaps an ideal expression of Kurdish writing and its peculiar superposition *between* and *above* literature and politics. The recurrent theme of the pen and sword binary or association fittingly reflects the semi-autonomous state of the Kurdish literary institution: a literature that is still dependent on politics. In the lack of an established literary tradition that is officially supported and promoted there remains little alternative for Kurdish writers except to take up the sword, the political arms, to gain literary autonomy.

Thus, the most fitting word to describe the Kurdish writer is Şarman's "*xençernûs*," an *author-politician.* As Casanova reminds us, it is only when literature is freed from its initial condition of political dependency that it can finally reach a position from which to assert its own autonomy (*The World Republic of Letters* 37). It seems like the Kurdish language, literature, and writer will continue to preserve their position that places them somewhere between politics and literature, and beyond a mere political literature. In the end, politics, and consequently power relations, is not missing in any literary institution, and language itself is little more than a *bona fide* institution of power constitution, exchange, and impositions—indeed, what is a language but a "dialect with

[29] Ji lewra ez benî, qedrê min bizane, ji min dûr mekeve, min ji xwe dûr meêxe û bi min ne qelema xwe, lê parsûwên dijminên xwe jêke!..

an army and a navy" (May 135). What makes the Kurdish case unique, then, is its semi-autonomous position, an embryonic stage that could not be designated simply as a political literature since being political is either an option for a free writer of an autonomous literary institution or a natural outcome of acting within and through language, a space in which power relations are acted out. In the Kurdish case, as in the case of many minor or resistant literatures, there is an excess baggage.

Drawing on Bourdieu's discussion on the nature of legal discourse, which is defined as "a creative speech which brings into existence that which it utters," it can be argued that this excess baggage is a political discourse that works out like all performative expressions, *viz.*, blessings, orders, wishes, and the like, inheriting a strong "originative power." Bourdieu likens such discourse to "the *intuitus originarius* which Kant ascribed to God, [which] creates what it states, in contrast to all derived, observational statements, which simply record a pre-existent given" (42). True, language, as Bourdieu reminds us, is the infinite generative with a limitless originative capacity (in the Kantian sense); or an absolute power that produces existence by simply producing the representation of existence (42). The originative capacity of Kurdish, and other dominated, prohibited, forbidden, denied languages, however, politically speaking**,** is that they have an unmatchable illocutionary power to produce politics. Put differently, speaking and writing in Kurdish, is always already political as it is always already an act of striking back, a resistance, a dissidence, and a challenge to the authority. This "politics originating capacity" of the Kurdish language, as seen in the case of Zana, or a metalinguistic discourse that automatically produces politics explains why and how any borders between Kurdish literature and politics are so easily transgressed.

From this politico-historical perspective, Hesenê Metê's text is of paramount importance because, in a sense, it re-contextualizes the Kurdish cultural nationalism's

paradigm concerning the Kurdish language. In some ways, the story is a recapitulation of the renowned 17th-century Kurdish poet Ehmedê Khani's[30] famous verses in *Mem û Zîn* concerning his reason for writing in Kurdish, namely, his desire to silence other nations' assumptions about the lack of books in Kurdish and the inability of Kurds to write books. In the introductory chapter in which Khani defends the reasoning for writing his book in Kurdish rather than one of the more cultivated languages of the time (Persian, Arabic, Ottoman-Turkish), he states: "So that people might not say: 'The Kurds have no origin, knowledge and base / Various nations have their own books, With the sole exception of Kurds'" (Ahmed Khani 33).[31] Metê's story repeats Khani's reasons, but in a more complex fashion, since the need for Kurdish-language writing is something imposed not by other nations but by Darîn's family and tribesmen. Darîn's family first and foremost aims to eliminate the shame of not having a Kurdish book written by a member of their tribe, but the story is somewhat more complex than that. First of all, none of the family members can actually read; in fact, Darîn's aunt is completely blind. Even more bizarrely, they intend to give the prospective book to the famous *dengbêj*[32] of the village, so that he can memorize the entire book and recite it. Their motivation comes from a rival family's son, Garût, who has written two books that his mother has passed on to the *dengbêj.*

[30] Ehmedê Khani, or Xanî, (1651-1707) was a Kurdish poet and prominent religious figure. His most important work, the classic Kurdish love story *Mem û Zîn* (1692), is considered the national epopee of Kurdish literature and one of the most important, adapted, and circulated love stories written in Kurdish. According to van Bruinessen, Khani's "work owes its fame among twentieth-century Kurds to yet another level that is explicitly there: it can be read as a forceful expression not only of pride in Kurdish ethnic identity but of the desire for a Kurdish state" ("Ehmedî Xanî's Mem û Zîn" 40). Khani's text has raised many discussions and disputes among Kurdish scholars and nationalists, particularly between primordialists who read in Khani's words the origin and rise of Kurdish nationalism and instrumentalists who find such reading as an example of modern-day nationalism's re-contextualisation and anachronistic tendencies. For further reading see Hassanpour 87-88.

[31] Da xelqi nebêjitin ku "Ekrad / Bê me'rîfet in, bi esl û bunyad /Enwa'ê milel xwudankitêb in / Kurmanci tenê di bêhisêb in (Ehmedê Xanî 157-58).

[32] Dengbêj (from *deng* [voice] and *bêj* [present tense of the verb *gotin,* to tell)] is a man or woman who recites epics in Kurdish oral literature.

Darîn's brother reports to him that Garût's mother has made a bag out of white linen, embroidered it, put the son's book in it, and hung it on the wall of their guestroom, just as one does with the Qur'an. Darîn's father dies while waiting for the books written by his son. In his letter, Darîn's brother recounts the incident and the last wish of his father as follows:

> After I told him the real situation [that Darîn is not writing books], he felt worse than I, and he fell ill. Until eight days prior, he was in his deathbed; now his bed is empty. In his deathbed, he was not scared of God like every other man, he was not scared of dying; he did not open his hand to ask for mercy from prophets. He did not ask for some water like other dying people. All he was saying was this: "Go and tell Darîn… tell him to write a book." His last and unfinished words were for a book, he said: "Book, book, bo…" (37-38)[33]

Darîn's brother explains that "having books written by a member (of the family) is a source of great pride for a family. It is a big disgrace if at least one member in the family has not written a book" (23). He demands that Darîn write a book so that they would not be seen as inferior to the other families. This speech stands as an important rupture in the history of Kurdish cultural nationalism, which has always been identified by its reactive nature, as a response to other nationalisms. What we find here is a new step: Darîn's book is not intended as a response to books written in other languages; on the contrary, writing in Kurdish is here a response to what has already been written in Kurdish.

An important scene in the text provides a further clarification of this obsession with writing and books. Here, in Darîn's dream, there is an apocalyptic setting in which many people are getting in long lines in front of some writers who write whatever may

[33] Piştî ku min rastiya xwe û te jê re vekir, ji min jî xirabtir bû û kete nivînan. Heta heyşt rojan beriya nuha jî di nava nivînan de bû. Anuha nivînên wî vala ne. Di ber sekratê de jî weke hemû kesan ji Xwedê ne tirsiya, ji mirinê ne tirsiya, destê xwe li ber pêxemberan venegirt û daxwaza şefaetê ji wan ne kir. Weke hemû kesên li ber mirinê av ne xwest. Gotinên ku digot ev bûn, digot: 'Ling bidin ser Darîn û jê re bibêjin… bibêjin bila pirtûkekê lêke.' Peyvên xwe yên dawîn û nîvçe jî ji bo pirtûkê bi kar hanî û got: 'Pirtûk, pirtûk… pirt…'

be requested by these people in scripture-like parchments. Darîn follows a man who swaps a young girl for a piece of such parchment and tries to see what is written on it, but fails. Following this dream, he decides to write a book similar to these parchments, which he refers to as "the book of death," for his mother. In a footnote appearing in the original text, "the book of death" [*pirtûka mirinê*] is explained as follows:

> It is said, 1500 years before Messiah, in the Middle East, people were believing that after death, on the other side of life, they would be questioned. In order to have a safe passage and get through the difficult questions, one needs a piece of writing to show, just like passports of today. These are referred to as the texts from the book of death. (42)[34]

In the manifest level of interpretation, this scene could be taken as indicative of the relationship the Kurdish community has with religious scriptures, which is based on an absolute devotion despite the lack of comprehension. The perception of writing, in this case, is a result of illiteracy of religious text, ignorance, and a lack of understanding. Aside from this manifest meaning, however, in the socio-political context, a political critique of the authority of religious figures, *i.e.,* sheikhs and mullahs, in the Kurdish community surfaces. Thus, this scene in Darîn's dream appears to point the political ramifications of religious illiteracy, that is not being able to read and understand religious texts, that has informed the interaction of the Kurdish community with religious authorities. Put differently, Darîn's dream, while highlighting the gap between the common person and the religious stratum in particular, in fact draws attention to the hegemonic power of writing. The deployment of such a dream scene could, then, be related to the general theme of the story: knowledge is power and to acquire that power it is essential to have the ability to write, or scriptural authority.

[34] Dibêjin hezar û pêncsed sal beriya Mesîh, li rojhilata navîn baweriyeke wusa li ba merivan hebûye ku piştî mirinê, li aliyê din î jiyanê pirsan ji merivan dikin. Ji bo ku meriv bi silametî derbas bibin û ji pirsên dijwar bifilitin, pêwîstî bi çend xetên nivisandî hebûye ku meriv li wir weke pasaporteke îroyîn bi kar bînin. Ev jî bi navên tekst an jî pirtûkên mirinê bi nav bûne.

In a more general social context, *Êş* is a critique of the frame of mind that determines and shapes the reasons, motives, ways, and qualities of written works in Kurdish. Metê's *Êş* is a harsh critique of what could be referred to as "compelled writing" or "compelled writers," a term first used by Mehmed Uzun for his own writing. Uzun, together with many writers who wrote and write in Kurdish rather than the hegemonic language, defines this act as an "ethical responsibility," and identifies himself as a "compelled writer" [*mecbur yazar*] (Diken 390). Uzun states in an interview that "instead of sitting in our places and criticising, it is better that we grab the pen and create something better, richer, more powerful, and beautiful. Like we do in many arenas of society, we should enrich the Kurdish novel, and increase the number of writers" (*Bir Dil Yaratmak* 82). Hesenê Metê's text criticizes this exact attitude, which is determined and constrained by ethical obligation towards one's own language, and which has always been a hallmark of Kurdish cultural nationalism.

As a particular scene from *Êş*, in which a Kurdish writer lectures an audience about Kurdish language and literature and boasts about his wide and universal knowledge, comparing the Kurdish language and literature with other similar contexts, and stating that he is creating a new literature and language [Binêre, ez hunermendek im. Ez niviskar im. Ez edebiyat û zimanekî çêdikim, zimanekî nû… ji vî zimanî re bi fransî dibêjin: une langue nouvelle] (Mete 47), clearly reveals, Metê's text is a fictional dialogue on the language question and the boundaries of Kurdish literature. For a better understanding of this social level, and to hear different and competing, voices, and ideological standings to this issue, it is necessary to turn briefly to the debates that centre on the definitions and borders of Kurdish literature in Turkey.

A Kurdish literary institution in Turkey came into existence in less than a decade, following the lifting of ban on writing and publishing in the Kurdish language in 1991.

Thanks to already active and established literary circles in the Kurdish diaspora, Kurdish writers and activists managed to form a limited yet developing institution with its own magazines, publishing houses, cultural centres, and bookstores. As Clémence Scalbert-Yücel states, a more or less autonomous social space, that is a "semi-autonomous" Kurdish literary field, emerged with its own rules, issues, structures, relations, stakes, and dynamics ("Languages and the Definition of Literature" 172). Perhaps, not surprisingly, following the establishment of this literary field, or institution, one question repeatedly emerged as the centre of any literary discussions, that is the boundaries of this institution and consequently the issue of Kurdish writers writing in other majority languages. In a short time, the language, a nationalist, monolingual and unified vision of language, became the main response to this question.[35]

As Casanova has stressed many times in her pivotal work, *La République mondiale des Lettres* (The World Republic of Letters, 1999), almost all national literary spaces are sights of a major struggle between two set of strategies: "*assimilation*, or integration within a dominant literary space through a dilution or erasing of original differences [and] *differentiation*, which is to say the assertion of difference, typically on the basis of a claim to [a different] national identity" (179). This struggle is a phenomenon particularly true for the literary institutions that have arrived in the world literary space

[35] The problem of definition and bordering Kurdish literature has been addressed in many scholarly works. In her noted work "Language and the Definition of Literature: The Blurred Borders of Kurdish Literature in Contemporary Turkey" (2011), Scalbert-Yücel examines different anthologies of Kurdish literature published and circulated in Turkey and states that "these anthologies acknowledge what could be called a 'Kurdistan literature' which crosses not only international borders but also linguistic or dialectal borders, since they include authors who write in the Kurmanji, Sorani and Zazaki languages who use Arabic, Latin or Cyrillic scripts, and who come from Turkey, from Iraq, Iran, Syria, or Russia, thus unifying many rather scattered elements" ("Languages and the Definition of Literature" 175-76). According to Scalbert-Yücel given the complex nature of the linguistic conflict, the borders and a definition of Kurdish literature is difficult to pinpoint (173). Another prominent academic study, Ahmadzadeh's *Nation and Novel: A Study of Kurdish and Persian Narratives Discourse* (2003), although discusses the problem in detail adopts a similar transnational and trans-contextual approach, asserting: ''Kurdish Literature, despite the problematic consequences, includes all the literary texts which are written in the Kurdish language regardless of their particular dialect and geographical origins" (135).

belatedly and through the assertion of national difference (*The World Republic of Letters* 179). What Casanova calls an "unavoidable painful choice" or a "terrible and inescapable dilemma," is a peculiarity specifically faced by the writers of these "belated" national literatures (deprived and dominated cultures and denied, forbidden, unrecognised languages) when they decide to enter the literary world (*The World Republic of Letters* 180). These writers have to decide between registering and affirming their difference and entering a literary institution which is much less established/rewarding/recognised and much more limited or restraining their difference, at least linguistically, and open their literature to a broader, more established/rewarding/recognised yet decidedly assimilative literary institution (Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* 180). Such painful choices, obligations, and dilemmas have produced a universal family of literatures called "minor literatures" by theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their work on Kafka (1975), in which they defined this term by three principle characteristics; the *deterritorialisation* of language, the political element, and the collective value.

As Laurent Mignon discusses in the context of Kurdish poets who write in Turkish, these three principle characteristics are also visible in the Kurdish case ("A Pilgrim's Progress" 197). Mignon argues that the works of Turkish-writing Kurdish poets are characterised by "the narration of Kurdish culture in Turkish," and the appropriation of Turkish language, "Kurdification of Turkish," that "bears the burden of another experience" (197). "The linguistically subversive dimension of some of these verses," in which Turkish is Kurdified, according to Mignon, "is akin to the 'revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature', which are distinctive for what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have defined as 'minor literature'" (197). The most important aspect of such words is the creation of

"a hybrid tongue that transcends national and linguistic borders," (Mignon, "A Pilgrim's Progress" 197).

Before attending to the Kurdish case, let us first specify the categories of Kurdish writers in the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions, that have long become popular references when discussing the issue of borders and the definition of Kurdish literature. Accordingly, there are four main types of Kurdish writers in this context: (i) Kurdish writers from the assimilation period (1923-1991), those who started to write in a literary space when writing and publishing in Kurdish was from a legal and political viewpoint nearly impossible, *e.g.*, Yaşar Kemal (1923-2015), Esma Ocak (1928-2011)[36], and many others; (ii) a growing number of writers who started their literary career after writing and publishing in Kurdish became legally possible and politically tolerated, yet due to various reasons chose to write in Turkish like Yavuz Ekinci (b.1979); (iii) those who started to write in Turkish yet after some work and mastering the Kurdish language began to write in Kurdish, the most recent one being Suzan Samanci (b.1962);[37] and (iv) writers who wrote both in Kurdish and Turkish, such as Mehmed Uzun. To these categories one could add writers who had been sentenced to life-time imprisonment, writers of "*müebbet edebiyatı*" (the literature of life imprisonment) as it is referred to in Turkish, a category

[36] One of the first Kurdish female authors, Ocak is included in both Turkish and Kurdish literary anthologies, including Uzun's *Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî* (487). Despite the language of stories and novels Ocak wrote was Turkish, a distinctively Kurdish context which composed of the Kurdish characters and socio-cultural background is clearly discernible. Ocak's main contribution to the Turkish-Kurdish literary institution is arguably through her literary debut, the stories collected in *Berdel* (Sister Swapping, 1981).

[37] Samanci is one of the more interesting examples of the blurring of boundaries between the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions. She had published many collections of short stories and novels in Turkish and became a prominent literary figure in the Turkish literary institution, before publishing her first collection of short stories in Kurdish in 2015. The world of Samanci's stories and novels has always been prominently, if not exclusively, Kurdish—not only in terms of problematics, themes, settings, characters, places, and socio-cultural and political context but also sensitivities, behaviours, feelings, sentiments, and the manner in which they are acted and expressed. As Suat Baran aptly points out Samanci "narrates Kurdish literature in the Turkish language" (43).

which has representatives in all four categories and includes imprisoned ex-guerrilla authors like Edip Yalçınkaya (b.1971) and Murat Türk (b.1976).[38]

In the Kurdish literary institution, related discussions generally revolve around the third group. Writers of other categories are approached in a more sympathetic way, yet, writers who continue to write in Turkish attract staunch criticism, if not condemnation, particularly from authors and scholars writing in Kurdish. The scope of discussions is framed by two major paradigms with relevant if not similar arguments, ideas, and concepts: post-colonialism (and colonialism) and nationalism. There is neither a minimum of political resources accumulated nor a minimum of political independence attained, as marked crucial by Casanova, for "the struggle for a specifically literary autonomy can be carried on" as done in the post-colonial contexts (*The World Republic of Letters* 193).[39] Nevertheless, many Kurdish writers and critics erroneously parallel the Kurdish case with the post-colonial contexts (in which writers were and are faced with the decision of writing either in the more established and recognised language of the coloniser or starting their own national literature in their own deprived language which is not sufficiently standardised, institutionalised, and universally recognised), and thus de-contextualise it. Further, they decidedly adopt a nationalist outlook which is bordered by

[38] There is a growing branch of literature by such writers whose works are published particularly by Aram publishing house. For a further reading see Öz and Tözeren.

[39] The language question has been a main point of discussion in the post-colonial context ever since former colonies began to gain independence. In this perspective, a very famous debate took place between the two of the most well-known and influential African writers, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. The debate began when Thiong'o, already universally acclaimed for his works in English, declared that writing in the language of the colonialist was equal to keeping one's subjugated position and asked a crucial question: "What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?" (26) In his response to wa Thiong'o's declaration, Achebe raised the point that it was easy from a safe writerly distance to ridicule the African writers' predicament, and proclaim that African writers should change the predicament instead of describing it (101). To Achebe, in such outlook "the politics of language becomes *politicking* with language" and this is "a direct reflection of a slowly perfected Manichean vision of the world" in which wa Thiong'o sees only one "great struggle between the two mutually opposed forces in Africa today: an imperialist tradition on one hand a resistance tradition on the other" (Achebe 101-102).

an extensively Manichean and ethically binarist vision, a defensive and reactionary discourse, and an isolationist and chauvinist critical vocabulary and nationalist glossary. In this outlook, the individual voice is rarely heard, the collective encircles all arguments; a blaming, censorious, and impulsive criticism is dominant, and the dark shadow of the state and the officiality (their privation) is always projected.

To start with the first paradigm, indeed, there is a great deal of similarity between the Kurdish and post-colonial contexts. As discussed above in detail, the process of denial, banning, and degradation of the Kurdish language in Turkey could be likened to the colonial context that Ngugi wa Thiong'o has described in his pivotal work, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986). Here, wa Thiong'o stated that the most effective area of domination in the colonial context was not the material but the mental one, *viz.*, controlling people through language and culture, and consequently colonising their minds (16). The minds of subjugated people of ex-colonies, even after independence, remains colonised due to the established language and culture of the coloniser, and the socio-cultural, economic, educational, linguistic, and even political capital deposited in them and promised to those who master them. For post-colonial writers, then, "strategies of resistance are embedded in the choice of language as they choose between the abrogation and appropriation of the language of the colonizer, the 'acquired language' *(langue apprise),* and their own, the 'maternal dialect'" (Nagy-Zekmi 56).[40] The predicament harbours further challenges and dilemmas since the language of the literary work also determines the facilities, opportunities, and resources that will be available to the post-colonial writer in the realms of publication, distribution, and the readership—"writing back to […] or ingratiating him/herself in a self-exoticising

[40] "Abrogation, in this context, is the rejection of normative forms of the coloniser's language as opposed to its non-standard and dialectal use in the colonies, and appropriation is the adaptation of the coloniser's language for postcolonial writing" (Nagy-Zekmi 59).

gesture," as Silvia Nagy-Zekmi puts it (56). Even wa Thiong'o, who denounced writing in the coloniser's language stated: "After I had written *A Grain of Wheat*, I underwent a crisis. —I knew whom I was writing about but whom was I writing for? The peasants whose struggles fed the novel would never read it" (72).

What is often ignored by those who compare the Kurdish case with the post-colonial one, is the fact that despite the legal, economic, and political context becoming somewhat more tolerant, the level of autonomy, promotion and self-determination as seen in the post-colonial contexts has never been attained in the Kurdish context and literary institution in Turkey yet. Remezan Alan, a prominent scholar of Kurdish language and literature, also stresses the relevance of colonial and post-colonial contexts to the Kurdish case, stating that writing in Kurdish naturally reflects an anti-colonial act, making it difficult to believe the sincerity of the Kurdish writers who still write in non-Kurdish languages (*Bendname* 77). According to Alan, writing in Turkish as a Kurd is more than just a cruel outcome of assimilation or a success of colonialist education.

> In this choice [of writing in Turkish, note that Alan uses the word 'choice' "*tercîh*"] the mundane self-interests, populistic inclinations, carefreeness from any nationalistic responsibilities, and personal submission are the main reasons. When compared with the unpopularity [lacking demand] of writings in Kurdish, writing in Turkish harbours a possibility of fame and glory, financial rewards and awards, and an esteem without risk… (*Bendname* 77-78).[41]

Alan's severe criticism reflects a general attitude towards Turkish-writing Kurdish authors, as is clearly projected in some responses given to a literary investigation conducted by *Notos Öykü*, a literary magazine in Turkey, in August-September 2008 by

[41] Dibêjim, ji ber sedemên xwe yên taybet kurdînûsîn, di xwe de edayeke antî-kolonyal dihewîne û me mecbûr dike ku em li ser samimiyeta jan û birînên kurdînenûsan bikevin şik û gumanan! Madem dûvê gotinê heya vira hat, em eşkere bibêjin: Li vî parçeyî, tirkînûsîna kurdan, ne tenê encameke zalim a asîmîlasyonê ye an ne tenê marîfeta tedrîsateke kolonyal e. Di vê tercîhê de berjewendiyên rojane, hewesên populer, bêxemiya netewî, rambûna şexsî jî sedemên sereke ne. Li hember bêrewaciya kurdî, tirkînûsîn, îhtimala şan û şohretê ye; qezenckirina pere û xelatan e; teqdîrkirineke bê risk e…

many prominent Kurdish writers and scholars, including Şener Özmen, Yunus Eroğlu, Selim Temo, Firat Cewerî, Kawa Nemir, and Alan himself.

The response given to the main question of the investigation by *Notos Öykü*, "is there a Kurdish literature in Turkey?" have clearly shown that an inclination to de-contextualise the Kurdish case, and frame the whole issue with the terms and arguments of nationalisation, colonialism, and the nation-state is dominant among Kurdish intellectuals and writers. There are, of course, more appropriate and moderate approaches yet those remain marginal. In his short response, Eroğlu, for instance, frames the question quite aptly, stating that Kurdish writers just like their readers have to tackle language problems; they, too, write and read in a language that is not appreciated enough, has a limited circulation, and numerous issues that are caused by the lack of standardisation and institutionalisation. Furthermore, they suffer from an inferiority complex that leads them to compare their situation and achievements with older literary traditions, and consequently to try too hard to find or create the Kurdish adaptations of whatever those traditions may have (*Notos Öykü* 56).

In another such investigation conducted by *Dîwar*, a Kurdish literary magazine, in 2013, entitled "Kurd Çima Bi Zimanê Serdestan Dinivîsin?" (Why Do Kurds Write in the Language of the Sovereigns?), İlhami Sidar, a Kurdish poet and writer who began writing in Kurdish after attaining literary prominence in Turkish, explains how after writing a couple of books and reading a great deal in Turkish, when the ban on writing and publishing in Kurdish was lifted, he decided to learn his native Kurdish language. Framing and discussing his own personal experience within the colonial context, Sidar, too, parallels the Kurdish case to that of Algerians and Indians (*Dîwar* 4-5). Similarly, one of the most prominent Kurdish authors, Yavuz Ekinci, when asked where he positions himself, considering that he is a Kurdish writer writing in Turkish, states that he does not

seek any position or category and he is neither the first nor the last writer who wrote, currently writes, or will write, in a language other than his/her mother-tongue (*Dîwar* 14). Ekinci states that had he started to write now [in 2013] he would probably write in Kurdish but it is all too late for that. A writer, Ekinci argues, needs to be evaluated solely by the merits of his/her writing, not the ethno-national identity of language of his/her writing. For Ekinci, attributing a value to a work simply because it is written in Kurdish is a degrading act on behalf of Kurdish language and literature, and further, writing in Kurdish just for the sake of writing in Kurdish (purely out of national, ethical and political responsibility) neither will end the problem nor will add any merit to wider literature or the Kurdish language. Ekinci, believes that the problem will naturally disappear as more accomplished and successful works are written in Kurdish (*Dîwar* 14).

Ekinci's argument against "writing in Kurdish merely for the sake of writing in Kurdish," marks an important current in the Kurdish literary institution. This is the dilemma facing Darîn in "*Êş*." He is pushed to write, and write in his own language. No other aspects of writing, *viz.*, aesthetic value, technical and stylistic concern, content, form, and the like, are viewed as important. All that matters is writing something in Kurdish. This is reminiscent of the male-dominated literary outlook to women's literature and the coloniser's view of the literature produced by the colonised. Often referred to as the "flying pig" syndrome whereby a woman's writing was previously seen something unnatural and miraculous, so much so that little attention is paid to the quality and the value, just as if a pig was to fly—the very phenomenon of a flying pig would be so shockingly unnatural and miraculous that no one would care whether the pig flies well or not. Germaine Greer explains the phenomenon, in her article, "Flying Pigs and Double Standards," in the *Times Literary Supplement* (26 July 1974), as follows: "It is the same kind of magnanimous sentimentality that prompts good-hearted people to marvel at

paintings by cripples who have to hold the brush in their teeth" (784). This is also a common phenomenon in post-colonial context, where in light of the relation between the political, historical and literary, as Casanova points, "an *external* criticism that runs the risk of reducing the literary to the political, imposing a series of annexations or short-circuits, and often passing in silence over the actual aesthetic, formal or stylistic characteristics that actually 'make' literature" hold sway ("Literature as a World" 71). From such a perspective, Darîn's opposition to his family's imposition to write "anything," as long as it is in Kurdish, to ignore the aesthetic and literary value and sacrifice them to the national obligation is a rejection of becoming a flying pig and one who possesses double standards.

To sum up, the Kurdish language conflict, as well as the denial of Kurdish cultural rights, the late-flourishing of the modern Kurdish literature, and all other relevant and consequential outcomes of the Kurdish question emerged from two interrelated reasons: the lack of a Kurdish nation-state and the lack of true democracy. The situation largely remains the same, yet it seems as though the Kurdish writers and intellectuals have already started to *de-contextualize* the "Kurdish case" (behaving as if there is now an existing Kurdish nation-state along with Kurdish writers continuing with the "blasphemy" of writing in Turkish) and reflect the very autocratic outlook they have learnt from the Turkish politico-historical context, demanding aggressive national loyalty, homogeneity, and integrity. Yet, there always remains so much more than just national pride, responsibility, shame, guilt, and other relevant feelings, and motives to consider. A nationalist is likely to place these in the first order, but what if a writer who happened to be a Kurd did not end up as one?

What is missing in the perspective and framing of the Kurdish writers and scholars is, then, a transformative and emancipatory politics that Eagleton explained in the context

of the nationalist struggle ("Nationalism, Irony, and Commitment" 37). Accordingly, like other major forms of struggle (class and gender), the nationalist struggle did not succeed in escaping the categories it aimed to destroy, rather, it fell right into those categories, out of "the ironic effect of oppression which prevents the oppressed from recognising its real need for emancipation. Power not only oppresses the social, sexual or ethnic identities but also forces the oppressed to emphasise many values that are not as important in the long-term" (cited from Eagleton in Uçarlar 176). Thus, in the post-colonial context, and the minority contexts in which a minimum amount of political and legal resources is accumulated, the freedom of one previously subjugated group should not lead to the oppression of new ones. "In terms of linguistic rights, this is the freedom to speak the language one wishes rather than the freedom 'only' to speak one's mother tongue, which often becomes an obligation for the members of minorities" (Uçarlar 176).

In this vein, Nesrin Uçarlar points that a transformative and emancipatory politics could be developed only by deconstruction, with a leading motive focused on justice (268). Since injustice ultimately operates through constructed and reconstructed binary oppositions, what renders the resistance against domination and its systemic injustice vain is the limits of the binary oppositions and positioning (Uçarlar 268). "A significant resistance is not the one that only stands against domination, but it is one which undermines the basis of domination by violating the boundaries of that binary opposition" (Uçarlar 268). Without a proper deconstructive frame and a transformative resistance, Uçarlar reminds us, the power that is attained by a resistance movement will produce its own limits and boundaries and create new subjects and objects, thus ultimately lead to the equalisation of power with domination (268).

It is from such a perspective that a monolingual vision of literature and extra-literary issues has become dominant in the Kurdish literary field (Scalbert-Yücel,

"Emergence and Equivocal Autonomization" 366). Kurdish writers and intellectuals who level strong criticism and condemnation against those Kurdish writers' writing in Turkish, in other words, like all authoritarian nationalist power structures, already started to create their own centre and peripheries, to force a monolingual vision, to erase the hurting history and de-contextualize its own predicament, and form its own boundaries. National obligation should not lead to a strong national resentment towards those who do not feel or choose not to follow the same obligations. Strong criticism of Turkish-writing Kurdish authors for pursuing a larger readership and greater popularity or arguing that their opinion and works should be ignored as Özmen does (*Notos Öykü* 50), signals a dangerously authoritarian, patronising, monolithic future, inherited from the Kemalist and Turkish nationalist model for the Kurdish literary institution.

At the second horizon, where different social and ideological positions and frames clash, we read a dialogue between opposing post-colonial perspectives, namely, the agitating truth about the English or French-writing African authors, on the one hand, and the criticism of Kurdish-writing Kurdish authors against state authority as well as against Turkish-writing Kurdish authors, on the other. Here, the dialogue between Darîn and his family involves voices of Ehmedê Khani, Celadet Bedir Khan, Fanon, Thiong'o, Achebe, Alan, Ekinci, Özmen, Eroğlu, and many other writers who had to choose between writing in the more established and recognised language of the coloniser/oppressor and writing in their own marginalised language. Thus, the ideologeme of *Êş* could be identified as the moral dilemma of the national author, or the "compelled writer." Let us leave this discussion here and turn to our text and open it to the historical and universal interpretation.

At the level of historical and universal generality, which is the last horizon in the Jamesonian model, *Êş* finds its overarching interpretation in the eternal struggle between

desire and obligation, or individual free will and collective imperative. Darîn's story, when interpreted on the bases of formal choices, delivers another socio-symbolic and political message, this time through the ideology of form. Indeed, Metê's conceit and success is his effective, intensive, and palpable mirroring of the clash of individual desire and national obligation in the narrative mode. Here, another struggle is staged and delivered between the oratorical declamation that voice the individual desire, on the one hand, and the written narrative that becomes another book in Kurdish, on the other. Almost a book, though, since the generic mode that oscillates between the oral statement and the written, oscillates between story and novel genres as well.

Êş (again, meaning "Pain") is an embodiment of the tension caused by the necessity of writing and the impossibility of acting upon this necessity. This predicament is solved by converting the story to a statement; indeed, the text seems less written than emotionally poured out onto paper. The protagonist makes this statement in his room, although this room, symbolically, could be seen as a courtroom in which the entire statement/defense is addressed to Mîr Celadet Alî Bedir Khan,[42] as if he were the juridical authority. One question comes to the fore: why does Darîn make this statement and address it to Celadet rather than Khani? Since the story is a reformulation of Khani's verses, one would expect Darîn to speak to Khani's picture rather than Celadet's. A reference to one of Celadet Bedir Khan's[43] articles provides a possible answer to this question. This article, "Zilamek û Zimanek" (A Man and a Language), was published

[42] Born into the influential Bedir Khani family, Celadet Alî (1893-1951) was the editor of two important Kurdish journals, *Hawar* (Call; 1932-45) and *Ronahî* (The Light; 1942-45), both published in Syria. He is best known for his considerable contributions to Kurdish language and literature. He developed and used the Latin-based alphabet for the language of northern Kurds, Kurmanji, and this "Bedir Khan script" is still in use among Kurdish communities in Turkey, Syria and diasporas today.

[43] Due to quotations, the spelling of certain proper names might vary, otherwise, as in the case of Celadet Bedir Khan [rather than Bedir Xan, Bedirxan] the English spelling is preferred.

under the pseudonym Herekol Azîzan in the 40th issue of *Hawar* by Celadet Bedir Khan. The important point is that along with Herekol Azîzan, it is known that Celadet used over thirty pseudonyms (some only once, others numerous times) to make it appear as if the magazine had a large number of writers (Aydogan, *Guman 2 & Wejêya Kurdî* 161). It is for this reason that Darîn narrates his story to Celadet. He is overcome with guilt due to his inability to write, and consequently he is unable to contribute to increase the number of Kurdish writers. He finds the solution to his predicament by narrating his story orally. This choice transforms the "written" into an "oral statement" or defense in a court.

The content of this formal choice is better understood when the distinction between "ethical life" and "morality" is taken into consideration. According to Hegel's distinction, morality "concerns the inner sphere of the individual, his moral intentions and religious conscience; it is distinguished from the sphere of abstract right or legality, which deals only with extended actions, their bare conformity to law, regardless of an agent's intentions" (Beiser 234). While morality treats each individual separately regardless of his place in the state and society, it should be noted that "ethical life considers the individual as an internal part of the social and political whole" (Beiser 234). On this basis, it is because of the ethical life that Darîn feels obliged to write, but the morality of writing prevents him from doing so.[44] He fails to write the book requested, and by the end of the text his story remains unwritten—though it is still told. Darîn questions the morality of writing in Kurdish purely for the sake of writing something Kurdish, something that many writers have done and continue to do in Turkey: they write to keep the language alive or pay a debt to their mother-tongue. With this tension between morality and the ethical life, the text is transferred to a universal level. Here, *Êş* is neither just about the Kurdish

[44] "Morality is an abstract universal: it makes the part prior to the whole, as if each individual were self-sufficient or independent. Ethical life is a concrete universal: it makes the whole prior to the part, such that the very identity of the individual depends on its place in the whole" (Beiser 234-35).

community's fear of being belittled by other ethnic groups, nor about the critique of the peculiar paradigms of cultural nationalism. It is one of the oldest dilemmas faced by human being: the individual's desires, thoughts, conscience, and intentions versus the forces of necessity, responsibility, and obligation.

There remains one last point to address with regard to the text's generic mode. Metê's *Êş* appears to challenge the generic boundaries of this thesis, since it is positioned somewhere between the genres of novel and short story. The meaning of this generic peculiarity, I argue, manifests itself in the history of novel writing in Kurdish and the verses of Khani's introduction to *Mem û Zîn*, which, as argued before, outlines both the main problematic of *Êş* and its inspiration. To attend to the first part of the argument, it is necessary to retrace the rise of the novel in Kurdish. As it is outlined by Ahmadzadeh in his work *Nation and Novel*, the adventure of prose fiction in Kurdish is littered with incomplete, lost, unpublished, uncirculated, destroyed, and rewritten texts. When reading Ahmadzadeh's very detailed and articulate subchapter, "The Kurdish novel: A Weak and Slow Beginning, But a Sure and Steady Development," one gets the impression of reading Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (If on a Winter's Night a Traveller, 1979), in which the novel starts constantly and repeatedly but never develops or develops only through another start. This similarly erratic adventure of the Kurdish prose fiction, as Ahmadzadeh points out, is the corollary of the absence of a Kurdish state,[45] which brings us to the second part of the argument, the one regarding Khani's introduction. Let us first cite the most important couplets from this introduction:

> If only we had a king [and a throne, and a crown, and all the other symbols of power], then the Ottomans would not dominate us. If only there were

[45] According to Ahmadzadeh, "Kurdish narrative discourse accompanies Kurdish nationalism as it strives towards objectifying its aims, rather than consolidating a nationalism imposed from above by a nation-state authority. It seems that the Kurdish novel is necessarily linked to Kurdish nationalism and that the fortune of the Kurdish novel is mainly related to the aspirations of Kurdish nationalism" ("Traces of Statelessness" 75).

> unity among us, and we would obey one another, then all of the Ottomans and Arabs and Iranians would become our servants, we would reach perfection in religion and politics, and we would become productive in knowledge and wisdom (translated by and cited in van Bruinessen, "Ehmedî Xanî's Mem û Zîn" 44).[46]

The historical and political interpretation of these lines stresses the absence of a state that can provide and foster political unity, protection, and advancement. In other words, had it been written in the 20th century, the political desire that fills these lines would likely surface and express itself as "if only we had a state." This symptomatic reading of political desire together with the ill-started development, or in Ahmadzadeh's formulation, "miscarriages of the-first-novel-to-be," of the Kurdish novel, when transferred to the ultimate historical level, uncovers the meaning of the text's generic mode. Had there been a Kurdish state, *Êş* would quite possibly have either been written in another manner and in a generic mode, most likely a "standard" novel, or it would never have been written at all—there would have been no need for any ethical obligation to save the language, to protect it, to write it, and to write such a story about it. Since, however, such a political structure does not exist, *Êş* is stated rather than being written, and it is written as a novella rather than as a standard novel. The manner in which the story is narrated, the story itself, and its generic mode are all structured by the absence of such a structure, a Kurdish state. Thus the political unconscious of *Êş* is filled with this conspicuous absence.

II. Purging Turkish of the Oriental and Islamic: The Turkish Language Question

The language question in Republican Turkey has always been intrinsically connected to two foundational principles of Kemalist ideology, secularism and

[46] Ger dê hebûwa me padîşahek / Laîq bidiya Xwedê kulahek […] Ger dê hebuwa me îttîfaqek / Vêkra bikra me înqiyadek / Rom û 'Ereb û 'Ecem bi temamî / Hemiyan ji me ra dikir xulamî / Tekmîli dikir me dîn û dewlet / Tehsîli dikir me îlm û hîkmet (Xanî 153-55).

Westernisation, on the one hand, and nationalism, on the other (Çolak 67). The relationship and influence of the former, secularism and Westernisation, was largely due to the Arabic script and Arabic and Persian contribution to the Ottoman lexicon, and Kemalists' belief that purging Turkish of these oriental and Islamic contributions would not only purify the Turkish language but also secularize the populace's thoughts and way of living, in essence to Westernise Turkish society. As for the latter, the Republican cadre's language policy was also the outcome of its nationalistic posture and aspirations founded upon the use of language as a nation-building element, *viz.*, Turkification of the Ottoman subject. Yılmaz Çolak reminds us that these two principles not only brought about an immense politicisation of language but also turned language into one of the most important boundary markers of Turkish identity and Turkey's public sphere and a great source of socio-cultural, economic, political, ethno-national capital (67).

As many scholars such as Geoffrey Lewis (1999), Çolak (2004), and Hüseyin Sadoğlu (2010) argue the discussions on both the necessity of a script revolution and language purification goes back to the Tanzimat period of the 19th century when mass printing and education,[47] as well as administrative[48] and legal reorganisations, made a common language for all an imperative (Çolak 69). The administrative and literary language of the empire, Ottoman-Turkish, was composed of Turkish (predominantly

[47] The organisational, educational, administrative, and legislative reforms of the Tanzimat brought about a closer link between the higher classes, officials, and executives and the masses, as it was necessary to inform and notify the public concerning the declarations, bills, and changes. The need for the unification of the spoken and written Turkish was partly due to this link and the rise in print capitalism and the emergence of journals and newspapers (Sadoğlu 66). Mass print and non-governmental periodicals were heavily dependent on a reading public, and to create one, the Ottoman administrators and intelligentsia knew that not only mass education but also simplification and purification of the language was imperative.

[48] With the Tanzimat new necessities in relation to the language and communication emerged in the Ottoman administration, too. Enver Ziya Karal states that when the first Ottoman-Turkish parliament gathered a new malady of Turkish that had gone unnoticed until then appeared: since all deputies were speaking in the Turkish dialect and accent of their region, understanding one another became problematic, even the stenographers were unable to work, thus Ahmet Mithat Efendi was appointed the assignment of keeping records and translating speeches into written Turkish (Karal 317).

verbs), Arabic, and Persian and was written in an extremely elegant manner in which delivering ideas and meaning came second to the grandiloquent and style. Thus the Ottoman-Turkish, both in spoken and written form, was a great source of socio-cultural and political capital, as it marked both the social status of the speakers and enabled them to communicate with the ruling classes (Sadoğlu 61).[49] Consequently, the Ottoman-Turkish was denoting a conclusive boundary between subject and power. Written in Arabic script, this language was no one's true mother tongue, an entirely literary language to which only people of higher classes had access through education. Further, its writing and spelling required a formal education and study, as the Arabic alphabet was not quite matching Turkish sounds.

According to Lewis, the spirit of the Tanzimat brought about the rise of the first nationalist stirrings and movements as well as journalism, which marked also a continuous tide of language reform, though episodic and unofficial (Lewis 12). From the Tanzimat until the Second Constitution, from the 1830s until the 1910s, the argument that Turkish needed to be simplified and/or purified was defended, and even personally implemented, by many prominent intellectual and political figures, including İbrahim Şinasi (1826-1871), Ziya Pasha (1829-1880), Ali Suavi (1839-1878), and Namık Kemal (1840-1888). With this new generation of Ottoman intelligentsia, *Yeni Osmanlılar* as they were originally referred to, questioned and attempted to change the traditional elitist Ottoman administrative and intellectual outlook, *vis-à-vis* written language, and spearheaded a new understanding of language, information, and literature as first and foremost for the public (Sadoğlu 76-77). Furthermore, for this first generation of

[49] Engin Sezer speaks of a trajectory of formality that determined the language use in the public sphere within the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. Accordingly, as the relationship between the people became more formal, the language, too, became more and more convoluted and accumulated an ever increasing number of Arabic and Persian words, compounds, and phrases that were not used in the common language and only learnt via a special education and *vice versa* (490).

revolutionaries, both language and literature were responsible for awakening, enlightening and even indoctrinating the public with a consciousness to demand its political and social rights, and familiarize it with the wider public movements throughout the world (Sadoğlu 76-77).

The attempts of these early reformists, however, remained informal and unsystematic until a small group of young intellectuals and writers, the *Young Pens* [*Genç Kalemler*], including a later leading ideologist of Republican Turkey, Ziya Gökalp and the short-story writer Ömer Seyfettin, published their revolutionary journal *the Young Pens* and their famous declarative article entitled "New Language" [*Yeni Lisan*] in Salonika in 1911 (Aydingün and Aydingün 417). The article highlighted the necessity for a national language and literature towards establishing national unity and solidarity. Here, Seyfettin argued that a Turkish sovereignty and progress, in terms of science, literature, and knowledge, was intrinsically bound to the formation of a national and popular language and, therefore, deserting the ornamental, odd and irrational language of the last five centuries, the Ottoman-Turkish, and writing in spoken language was an imperative (Aydingün and Aydingün 418). Despite all the emphasis on the link between language and national unity, however, in the post-Second Constitution period, language discussions were still revolving around a search for a national identity, the terms and concepts involved in the discussions were still unresolved and unclear—was the language Turkish or Ottoman? [*Osmanlıca*], did it need to be completely purified or just simplified?, *etc.*[50] According to Sadoğlu and Masami Arai, all these unsettled and uncertain issues were caused by the contradiction between the reception of nationalism as a mandatory ideology

[50] There were, in fact, three different responses by three groups to the language issue at the time. The *linguistic purists* [*tasfiyeciler*] were suggesting purifying the language by removing all foreign rules and words while the *conservatives* [*muhafazakarlar*] were rejecting any change and wished to retain the Arabic and Persian contributions. The third response was argued by *Genç Kalemler* in which a moderate version of purification and simplification was proposed (Aydingün and Aydingün 419-20).

by Turkish intellectuals, including Gökalp, and the current situation of the Ottoman State at the time, still an empire of various ethno-national and religious communities (Sadoğlu 153, Arai 74-75)

Apart from the Young Pens, the principal organisations and periodicals that had been effective in the nationalisation of language issue and the rise of Turkish cultural nationalism in pre-republican era were Turkish Association [*Türk Derneği*, 1908], Turkish Homeland Society [*Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti*, 1911-1912] and its journal *Turkish Homeland* [*Türk Yurdu*, 1911-1918], later to become an organ of Turkish Hearths [*Türk Ocakları*, 1911-1932] and despite numerous intervals remained in publication throughout the 20th century. Although, of the two determining factors, nationalism and secularism and Westernisation, that have always framed the language issue in the Turkish language context, the impact and arguments of a secularist posture was still missing in this pre-republican period, the language issue had already become linked to the question of progress and westernisation. As Murat Belge points out, as it was for the Kemalist cadre, for the intellectuals of the Second Constitution period, the lack of a public language and technical advancement were the main reasons for the low economic welfare ("Türkçe Sorunu I" 96-97). Still, as Çolak notes, despite their decided emphasis on the necessity of a national language for the creation of a nation and national culture, reformers and intellectuals of the post-Second Constitution period neither used the state's institutions, policies, and organs nor intervened directly in state structure to construct a national language (Çolak 70). The Kemalist cadre, on the other hand, saw the formation of a national language as an intrinsic, foundational and constitutional part of building new institutions and structures for the new nation-state. Therefore, Turkish was made the official language of the Turkish State [Part One, Article 3] in the 1924 Constitution (Çolak

70). Put differently, forming a political and cultural whole for them corresponded to creating a linguistic and national whole.

The language policy of Republican Turkey concentrated on two basic points: the first being the adoption of the Latin alphabet over the existing Arabic one, done in 1928. Despite its devastating impact on Ottoman cultural heritage, the new alphabet proved to be a "catastrophic success" as Lewis aptly notes. The second was the purging of foreign elements from Ottoman-Turkish, *viz.,* the purification of Turkish (Çolak 68). The purification of the language and the creation of a new "civilised" language, *i.e.,* a scientific, rationalist, non-oriental, and non-Islamic language in the Kemalist vision, gained momentum in the post-script revolution period. In carrying out these reforms, policies, and activities, the Turkish Language Society [*Türk Dil Kurumu*, founded in 1932], an official institute to supervise the state's language policy and purification of the Turkish language, has been highly influential, particularly during the single-party regime. The society immediately held *Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı* (the First Turkish Language Congress) between 26 September and 5 October 1932, and the Central General Committee elected by the congress "issued the following directive on the tasks to be given priority:

> (1) Collecting and publishing the treasures of the Turkish language existing in the popular language and old books; (2) clarifying the methods of word-creation in Turkish and employing them to extract various words from Turkish roots; (3) uncovering and publicizing pure Turkish words which may be substituted for words of foreign roots widely used in Turkish, especially in the written language." (Lewis 49)

Drawing on Hasan Reşit Tankut's account, Lewis depicts the high spirit generated by the First Language Congress as follows: "On the evening after the close of that First *Kurultay* there was great euphoria round Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's table. Atatürk himself was saying, 'We are going to defeat Ottoman. Turkish is going to be a language as free and as

independent as the Turkish nation, and with it we shall enter the world of civilisation at one go'" (Lewis 49). Uriel Heyd summarised the frenzy that led to this controversial speech in the following words:

> Now any Turkish word found in the vernacular of a remote Anatolian village, in the speech of an even more remote Turkish tribe in Siberia or in the manuscript of an eleventh century Turkish-Arabic dictionary was regarded as a possible addition to the modern Turkish vocabulary. On the other hand, practically every word of Arabic or Persian origin was considered outlawed and condemned to suppression as soon as a Turkish equivalent was found. (cited in Lewis 51)

The official replacement of all words of Arabic and Persian origin under the supervision of the Turkish Language Society between 1933 and 1935, ultimately resulted in a "linguistic anarchy" in Atatürk's own words that, "have brought the language to a deadlock," and thus, left the Kemalist cadre with no choice but to drop the policy of aggressive purification towards the end of 1935 (Çolak 81-82).

Although in the mid-1930s a relatively moderate approach to language purification became the official line, it did not take long for the Republican cadre to find yet another pseudo-scientific ideological craze: a new theory called Sun Language Theory [*Güneş Dil Teorisi*]. Being introduced in the Third Turkish Language Congress (August 1936), the theory was little more than a copy-cat language version of the artificial Turkish History Thesis, based on the questionable notion that Turkish was the "basic source of all cultural languages including the Ural-Altai, the Indo-European and the Semitic ones." (Çolak 83). Like the history thesis, this theory, too, was developed in the same frantic yet "appropriately" scientific and rationalist manner—with serious works (articles, booklets, and congress presentations) carried out by many Kemalist dilettantes and ideologues—and to obtain the approval and support of the master referee, that of Europe, a number of European scientists were invited to the congress (Çolak 83). From a Kemalist perspective, the theory not only asserted the Turkish roots of Indo-European languages, thus placing

Turks and the Turkish language in the Arian and Indo-European frame, but also through marking "Turkish as the *Ursprache*, the original mother tongue of all human beings," redressed all the previous failures, contradictions, and deadlocks of the earlier language reform (Aytürk 7-8).

All these efforts were determined by and connected to politics, history and religion, and all resulted from a desire to alleviate the pressure of lapsing into the margins of history, to treat the wounded national pride, and remove traces of the Islamic, oriental, and "uncivilised" Ottoman past. This was clearly visible in the discussions concerning the adoption of the Latin alphabet. For the Kemalist cadre, the Arabic characters were not only unsuitable and unpractical but also destructive and impedimental for the true Turkish spirit and culture, as it was seen as archaistic, anti-progressive, and uncivilised. Here the Arabic alphabet was not only attached with Islamic, oriental, and marginal aspects (as was the sharia courts, caliphate, and veil), and so was viewed as politically and culturally unfavourable, inferior, and disempowering, but rather, in the Kemalist imagination, was seen as a window into the past. The Kemalists saw the removal of the Arabic scripts as correcting a historical fault on the way to a modernised, Westernised, and powerful Turkish nation (Çolak 72-73).

What made the Tanzimat and post-Second Constitution periods' intellectual and political framing of language question so different from that of Republican regime is that the former's outlook and attempts were episodic, isolated, and mostly undertaken by individuals while the latter's were systematic, incorporated, and supervised by the government and the state. As Lewis notes, in his seminal work *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success,* the Turkish language reform, or language revolution, is quite a unique example of "linguistic engineering" and transformation that few nations have undertaken so successfully (1). Emphasising its unnatural and political character as

a top-to-down social project, Belge also accepts that few languages have been so well framed and shaped by legislation, governments, and new sovereign powers as the Turkish ("Türkçe Sorunu II" 94).

Turning to the Turkish literary institution, and specifically to fiction, the language issue appears to be predominantly framed by the pressure and anxieties of modernisation and Westernisation. This anxiety is particularly observable in the novels and stories of the Tanzimat period, in which through dandy characters who have no command of their own language, the Ottoman-Turkish, but attempt to show off with their limited French in the public sphere—*e.g.*, Ahmed Mithad Efendi's Felatun in *Felatûn Bey ile Râkım Efendi* (Felatûn Bey and Râkım Efendi, 1875) and Recaizâde Mahmud Ekrem's Bihrûz Bey in *Araba Sevdası* (The Carriage Affair, 1896). The anxieties caused by the cultural contempt of such dandy characters, "*alafranga züppe*" (Westernised snob) as they are referred to in Turkish scholarship, however, started to fade in the post-Second Constitution period and disappeared from the literary scene in Republican Turkey. Although, some nationalist and Islamist writers continued to touch upon the linguistic invasion and excessive borrowing and usage of foreign vocabulary, the Turkish language issue eventually came to be seen as an outdated topic in the Turkish literary institution.

Before ending this part, it is worth noting a new fictional current in the Turkish literary institution which emphasizes the Kurdish question with a specific eye towards the Kurdish language issue and has gradually gained popularity after the 2000s. Many of these texts, such as Ahmet Altan's novel *En Uzun Gece* (The Longest Night, 2005), Oya Baydar's *Kayıp Söz* (The Lost Words, 2007), and Özcan Karabulut's *Amida, Eğer Sana Gelemezsem* (Amida if I Could Not Make it to You, 2008) project and parallel a new populist trend of love in "troubled lands and times," within the Kurdish region of Turkey, which has been in particular demand on screen. These stories largely focus on characters

who suffer from loss, emotional instability, among other struggles and who travel to the Kurdish region for sociologic, academic, or humanistic reasons and during their journey are able to reconcile with themselves, or obtain a better, deeper, and richer way of living—the tired and overworked theme of self-inflicted identity crises in an exotic land. These novels follow in the footsteps of Ferit Edgü's famous novel *Kimse* (No one, 1976) and its sequel *O/Hakkâri'de Bir Mevsim* (A Season in Hakkâri, 1977) and many other stories, in which the story of an exiled Turkish teacher in a remote mountainous Kurdish village, and his linguistic and cultural isolation is narrated. What all these novels reflect is that the language conflict, for some Turkish writers, is no longer an issue solely focused on their native Turkish; it is other ethnic groups' language questions that Turkish writers are beginning to engage in, whether out of liberal, democratic, empathetic, and literary reasons or simply focusing on what is political and popular.

III. Conclusion: Compelled Writers, Found Literatures

Hugo Blanco, a Peruvian writer who led a rebellion in the 1960's and wrote *Land or Death: The Peasant Struggle in Peru* while serving 25 years in prison, explains the way a written paper is viewed by a mostly illiterate indigenous population:

> It is necessary to understand that for centuries the oppressors of the peasants made them regard paper as a god. Paper became a fetish: arrest orders are paper. By means of paper they crush the Indian in the courts. The peasant sees papers in the offices of the governor, the parish priest, the judge, the notary—wherever there is power; the landowner, too, keeps his accounts on paper. All the reckonings you have made, all your logical arguments, they refute by showing you a paper; the paper supersedes logic, it defeats it. (84-85)

The legitimacy of the power of the written is derived from widespread recognition of the constructive and reciprocal relationship between power and knowledge, especially after Foucault's and Said's works. Consequently, the way Peruvian peasants see and perceive the paper presents one such case in a colonial context. But the same paradigm

could be easily observed for Turkish and Kurdish communities, too, at least for most of the 20th century. The low rates of literacy, which stood at 30 per cent for men and 20 per cent for women until the 1950s, were not the only variable that had sharpened the hegemonic power of knowledge. For those who were identified as Ottoman Turks, the power-knowledge nexus worked itself out as an efficient means of Turkification. As for the Kurdish population, since their relation to the written language was and has remained on exclusion in favour of a language that is not their own, unsurprisingly, writing gained an authority—a scriptural authority—derived from the state's jurisdiction.

Notice here, the existence of the Kurdish language, and of the Kurds and many of their basic rights, have been entirely dependent on official writings and constitutional law. One can add to this a whole Turkish official historiography in which the existence of Kurds is either denied or ignored. While Kurds and Kurdish nationalism carried out one battle in the mountains against the state's military force, they had to maintain another one on pages against the scriptural authority of the state and Turkish nationalism, which has come to shape much of the existing Kurdish cultural nationalism. From this vantage point, the collective urge among the Kurds for books and for writing in their language finds yet another political meaning.

The relationship between power and knowledge or scriptural authority, the hegemonic power generated from the writing, points out a channel where many texts from Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions merge, although texts from the latter are largely those which also come to focus on the Kurdish language question. Still, a majority of texts from both literary institutions seems to map out how national identity and unity pivots on language. The Turkish literary institution, although has no novels, as yet, which is specifically suitable to observe the politics of language and to compare with *Êş*, or any other text from the Kurdish literary institution, still, has many novels such as Yakup

Kadri's *Yaban* (Alien, 1932) that transmit, albeit not directly, the Republican elite's use of scriptural authority to form the nation and a hegemonic power over the same nation. Metê's work, on the other hand, illustrates the desire of a nation-to-be to obtain scriptural authority, books and a literature in Kurdish, in order to fight against the "other's" scriptural authority, or to differentiate itself and declare its autonomy.

In "The Turkish Option in Comparative Perspective," Ernest Gellner argues that congruence between state and culture is "the basic underlying pattern of nationalisms" (240). Accordingly, paths to the marriage of state or its representatives (the groom) and culture or nation (the bride) vary with respect to the availability and condition of the partners (241). Gellner maintains that in the Turkish-Ottoman case, only the groom was present. He argues that there was a political elite looking for an ethnic group to construct the nation and that the Anatolian peasantry was one potential bride. "The bride hardly knew what was happening to her and continued to think for some time in religious rather than political terms" (242). The Republican cadre, however, had two powerful instruments to create the nation and unity: education and the Turkish language. Yet, the language needed a nationalist attention and a series of reforms to be able to create such nation. The language needed to be "Turkified" before it could be used to "Turkify."[51]

[51] Although an ultra-nationalist Turkic line of opposition to the official policy of linguistic assimilation and cultural integration was always present, the Kemalist regime saw the Turkish language, together with its complementary forces education, print, and media, as the main instrument for "Turkification" of non-Turkish elements. For those ultra-nationalists who were against linguistic assimilation, language remained the main source of differentiation and identity that would work against those seen as "inferior" to the Turkish nation. For example, Cevat Rifat Atilhan (1892-1967), an ultra-nationalist and conservative writer, argued that a Jew's speaking Turkish should not be viewed as a grace but an offence to the beautiful and sweet Turkish language [Yahudi'nin Türkçe konuşması bir lütuf değil, dünya kadar güzel Türkçemize ve tatlı şivemize bir tecavüzdür]. Similarly, Orhan Seyfi Orhon (1890-1972), a prominent poet of Anatolian populism, stated "do not speak Turkish, you fake citizen so that when the day arrives and we cannot recognize you from your face, we can know you from your words" [Sakın Türkçe konuşma sahte vatandaş! Bir gün gelip de seni özünden, yüzünden tanıyamazsak bile, bari sözünden tanıyalım] (cited from Rıfat N. Bali in Sadoğlu 286).

The process had its own accomplishments, failures, and socio-cultural ramifications. It seems, however, the Turkish language conflict, apart from some slight issues revisited by nationalist and/or Islamist Turkish writers, has no political repercussions any longer. Still, the process of the Turkish language reform and the way it unfolded is perplexing and abnormal enough. Kurdish scholars, for whom the Kurdish language was severely prohibited for decades in Turkey, have often expressed their surprise in Turkish intellectuals' and society's insensitivity and failure to empathize in relation to the denial and prohibiting of the Kurdish language, as well as the devastating impact of these actions on Kurdish society. It is evident that it would be unwise to expect a society and intelligentsia whose relationship with its own language has always been determined by higher politics and been so turbulent to properly understand the linguistic demands and questions of any other community.

Nevertheless, regardless of how dwarfed by the gravity and immensity of the Kurdish language conflict, the Turkish language question and the politics of language could be pinpointed in five main issues within the Turkish literary institution: (i) the anxieties caused by foreign linguistic and cultural invasion [as seen in the novels of the Tanzimat and the Second Constitution periods], (ii) the denial and assimilation of other ethno-national languages [as seen in the novels of nationalist Turkish writers emphasising the importance of linguistic assimilation towards creating a strong national integrity, or, in an altogether different context, in the writings of some leftist and liberal Turkish writers and writers from other ethno-national or religious communities who write in Turkish, condemning or criticising the assimilative policy], (iii) the language reform and its ramifications [particularly the impact of the script revolution and purification of Ottoman Turkish, although in some cases, such as Halid Ziya's, the writers themselves opted to simplify the language of their previous works], (iv) the degradation of the Ottoman

language and the secularisation of the Turkish language or the "Turkification" of the Islamic language [as seen in "salvation novels," specifically the "Turkification" of *azan* and secularist's contempt towards the use of Islamic vocabulary and phrases], and (v) language as a reflection of the gap and differences between socio-cultural ethnic, and religious groups [as seen in Republican novels via the theme of the gap between villagers and intellectuals, or the cultural capital and the prestige that comes with the use of Turkish-proper].

As for the Kurdish context, the situation is far more complex and the question, with all its ramifications, is still with us: The long history of a language ban, the lack of education in Kurdish, the two-faced approach of the Turkish state and authorities, a fast decreasing populace who speak the Kurdish language and an ever increasing populace with diglossia, the absence of institutions and standardisation, the peripheralisation of the Kurdish language, and its disadvantageous position as a means of accumulating economic, socio-cultural, and political capital, and the like. Metê's *Êş* is the outcome of the complexity created by this long list. There is little possibility that a text like *Êş* would have emerged in Turkish literature, and I think this speaks volumes about both the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions. When placed within a wholly Turkish context, as a text written for, by, and about Turkish society, *Êş* immediately loses its political meaning, and becomes little more than a story concerning a dilemma that the protagonist experiences. The dilemma has its manifest and latent meanings, but the political level becomes obscured. When situated within the Kurdish context, however, a much richer interpretation emerges, relating a different story which takes place in the same country and under the same sky, where a writer forced to write in his own language by his own people, where a politician is imprisoned for swearing for the sake of brotherhood in her own mother tongue.

In *Êş,* the politics of language, or the Kurdish language question, finds its expression in the urgent need for books written in Kurdish. This need is part and parcel of "cultural nationalism," which is marked by a reactionary policy towards other cultural nationalisms and the denial policies of the nation-state towards a Kurdish language, literature, and culture. The historical expression of this reaction, Khani, Koyi, and Celadet Bedir Khan's words and activities still frame the existing language discussions in the Kurdish context. It is true that the main question does not appear to have radically changed from the time and scope of these ideologues of the Kurdish language: producing in Kurdish is still ultimately an ethical and political obligation for Kurdish writers and intellectuals. The sword in other words still needs the pen, and *vice versa*. Darîn's predicament, thus, is that he does not believe in this pen and sword boundary, he does not accept using his pen in the manner of a sword. Thus, Metê's *Êş* is in dialogue with this politico-historical context, yet, it formulates the predicament and its boundaries from a different angle. This means that though the question remains with us, a "transformatory perspective" which sees the creative potential inherent in this question has begun to emerge as well. Darîn's story is not only the wish for a state, but in parallel with this, the wish for a literature free from the state. That is a pen independent of the sword, a writing free of responsibilities and obligations. Khani's and Koyi's imperative pen and sword collaboration, in other words, is now challenged. Darîn refuses to use his pen like a sword, as a sword, and for a sword. Metê's story not only narrates how nationalist obligations become a prison for writers but also invites the reader to think about that political supplement called language.

CHAPTER TWO

AS DARK AS LOVE, AS LIGHT AS POLITICS: POLITICS OF LOVE

This chapter discusses the politicisation of love in the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions, through the analyses of Esat Mahmut Karakurt's (1902-1977) *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* (The Girl[52] Who is Waiting for the Mountains, 1936) and Mehmed Uzun's (1953-2007) *Ronî Mîna Evînê Tarî Mîna Mirinê* (Light Like Love, Dark Like Death, 1998). I selected Karakurt's and Uzun's novels for two reasons: first, these works are generally grouped together in literary analysis, *e.g.*, Müslüm Yücel (2011 and 2012) and Remezan Alan (2015), because of the similarity of their content, (love stories between different national/ethnic groups and socio-political and historical contexts (internal war, rebellion). Secondly, the theme of intercultural or international love in these two novels unites the comparative axis (Turkish-Kurdish) and the topical axis (the politics of love) of the chapter. By another measure, however—and despite the fact that both novels employ inter-ethnic love as a response to a political question and they both have the same androcentric, patriarchical, and populist outlooks—Uzun and Karakurt appear as odd choices for comparison because of the time gap between them. Yet it is ultimately the *contexts* (again, the totality of texts, subtexts, and political, social, and historical contexts), that are compared here, which, I argue below, are substantially related historically, thematically, discursively, and politically.

Yücel attends to Karakurt's and Uzun's novel in both his earlier comprehensive study (2011), in which he investigated the image of Kurds in Turkish literature, as well as in his 2012 article on the influences of Turkish literature on Kurdish writers, which argues that Kevok is a reincarnation of Zeynep. He interprets these similarities and

[52] In Turkish the word "kız" is used for young and unmarried woman and it also has connotations of chastity and celibacy, thus, instead of translating it as "young woman" or simply "woman" we opted for the word "girl."

parallelism as an outcome of Uzun's modelling and mimicking of Karakurt. In fact, he criticises Uzun for mimicking the wrong author and text; that is, according to Yücel, given the abundance of high-quality material and authors to draw from, one should not rely on such below average writers and works (472). Although he claims that his objection to this modelling is not because of the parallelism and similarities between heroines or themes but because the spirit, sentiment, and thought that rules these texts are the same (472), Yücel does not elucidate the reasons behind this claim. Alan (2015), who also finds many similarities between the two texts, criticises Uzun for being in tune with Karakurt and Kemalist ideology. Like Yücel, Alan prescinds from adopting a critical approach towards the patriarchal structures and underpinnings that led to this inbreeding between Karakurt and Uzun. My analyses of these authors and texts through the Jamesonian model, the interpretive mode of transferring the voice of female guerrillas to the analysis, the discussions on the link between nationalist imagination and interethnic love, and the use of Negri and Hardt's theory of love, complements Yücel and Alan's works and opens new discussions about Karakurt's and Uzun's texts and the politics of love in the Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions.

This chapter proceeds as follows: first, I situate the two novels' love stories in the political history of modern Turkey, which, I suggest, made it possible for Uzun and Karakurt to imagine these love stories as they did. Then I analyse these love stories' political symbolism with specific attention to the socio-cultural and ethno-political underpinnings of gender roles in the novels. Finally, I attempt to unravel the more universal and foundational structures that condition Uzun's and Karakurt's understanding of love and which keeps them so closely attuned to one another. Here, I ground my analysis on Hardt and Negri's theory of love as a political concept.

I. Kurdish Fanatics, Kemalist Modernisers and Love in Troubled Lands: Esat Mahmut Karakurt's *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*

Esat Mahmut Karakurt, a master of literary feuilleton and one of the most popular novelists of the Republican period, was born in 1902 in Istanbul. His father, Mahmut Nedim Pasha, was a member of the Ottoman State Council. After graduating from *Kadıköy Sultanisi* (Kadıköy High School), Karakurt attended the Faculty of Dentistry and later the Faculty of Law in Istanbul University, receiving his degrees in these schools in 1924 and in 1930, respectively (Sağlık, *Bir Popüler Romancı* 19). However, Karakurt took neither law nor dentistry as his profession, opting for journalism instead. He began his writing career as a journalist with the *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* newspaper and later worked for some of the most popular newspapers of the time, including *Akşam, İkdam, Cumhuriyet*, *Tasvir*, and *Yeni Sabah* (Bozkurt 3).[53] Karakurt reported on sensational news, writing reports from abroad and making interviews about criminal cases; he also wrote serialised novels for these newspapers. Outside of his journalistic career, Karakurt worked as a literature teacher in many prominent high schools in Istanbul, including Galatasaray, Saint Michel, and Italian High School. Throughout his life-long careers of journalism and teaching, by his own admission, he moved from one institution to another whenever a higher wage was offered (Sağlık, *Bir Popüler Romancı* 24). In addition to these occupations, he was also elected representative of Urfa (1954-1960) and Senator (1961-1966). Karakurt died of a brain haemorrhage in 1977 in Istanbul.

After publishing his first book, a collection of short stories entitled *Aşkın Alevleri* (The Flames of Love, 1926), Karakurt wrote a total of 16 novels, all of which could be

[53] Doğan Hızlan states that Karakurt's novels dramatically increased the circulation of the newspapers in which they appeared (176). The newspapers for which Karakurt worked were mostly pro-state, if not pro-government, although *Tasvir* was known for its critical approach to the government of the time and *Yeni Sabah* was attacked by the government when the paper sent Karakurt to SSCB to report from Moscow.

categorised as romances, adventure stories, or spy narratives. These novels were first serialised in widely circulated newspapers before being printed as books. Karakurt achieved immense fame among the public and enjoyed wealth, fame, and fortune, even as many writers who created "aesthetically highly valued productions of art" were living in poverty (Sağlık, *Bir Popüler Romancı* 23).[54] His novels were not only a part of a popular wave of reading among the general public but also were in high demand by the Turkish movie industry of the time. All of his novels were adapted to cinema at least once and many of them were filmed twice including the central text of this chapter, *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* (The Girl Who is Waiting for the Mountains, 1936), his first novel *Vahşi Bir Kız Sevdim* (I Loved a Wild Girl, 1926), *Allah'a Ismarladık* (Farewell, 1934), *Son Gece* (The Last Night, 1938), *Kadın Severse* (If a Woman Loves, 1939), *İlk ve Son* (The First and The Last, 1940), *Ankara Ekspresi* (Ankara Express, 1946), and *Sokaktan Gelen Kadın* (The Woman Came from the Streets, 1954). There was even one incident in which a novel, *Ömrümün Tek Gecesi* (Only Night of My Life, 1949), was adapted to cinema thrice. Shot by prominent directors of the time like Atıf Yılmaz (1925-2006), Ömer Lütfü Akad (1916-2011), and Memduh Ün (1920-2015), these movies extended Karakurt's popularity to a substantial degree.

The central text for this chapter's purposes, *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, is Karakurt's third novel and was written in the aftermath of the Ararat Risings (1927-1930), one of the most disruptive rebellions in this period, which started in the slopes of Mount Ararat in 1927 and continued with major rebellions in the summer of 1930 (Bozarslan, "Some

[54] One of Karakurt's former students, Tahsin Yücel, recalls an incident from Karakurt's teaching days at Galatasaray High School. Reşat Nuri Güntekin (1889-1956), a prominent Turkish writer and inspector at the Ministry of National Education, had come to Karakurt's class for an inspection. After the inspection, Karakurt reportedly told his students that they had just met a true writer. When his students ask "how about you, teacher?" he confessed that he was not a true writer like Güntekin; rather, he wrote his novels to improve and promote literacy among the general public (Yücel 7).

Remarks on Kurdish Historiographical Discourse" 21). The novel recounts a love story between Adnan, a Turkish lieutenant, and Zeynep, the daughter of the rebellion's leader Sheikh Fuat. In the story, the Turkish army uses warplanes to bombard the impenetrable Kurdish fronts in the Ararat Mountains. Zeynep, with her skills in using a machine gun, resists the Turkish warplanes and is thus given the nickname "*kahpe*" (the slut) by Turkish soldiers. Because of the accelerating casualties, the Turkish generals decide to send someone to penetrate into Kurdish fronts and gather information about the locations and the amount of their ammunition. Adnan volunteers, risking his life. Disguising himself as a Kurdish shepherd, he lands somewhere in Ararat Mountains and encounters Zeynep. The two fight and Zeynep is injured. Adnan, however, helps her clean and dress the wound, at which point they fall into love. Zeynep discloses all the information Adnan is looking for and thus helps the Turkish army to destroy all Kurdish fronts and suppress the rebellion. Following the final bombardment, Zeynep is taken to court, where she is ardently defended by Adnan and his friends against the charges of disloyalty and divisiveness. In her defence, she expresses her regret and blames her former lover, who has by this time deserted her for another woman. Because of her service to the Turkish military, she is pardoned. In the last scene, married happily ever after, Adnan and Zeynep are kissing in their new home in Istanbul.

Dağları Bekleyen Kız covers a short time in the period of establishment and enforcement of Kemalist rule in Turkey, which accompanied by repeated Kurdish insurgency. It focuses on one of the most disruptive rebellions in this period, the Mount Ararat Uprising, which was led by the Kurdish nationalist movement, *Khoybun*,[55] and

[55] *Xoybûn* (or *Hoybûn*, means "being one's self") is a Kurdish national organisation, which was founded by Bedir Khan Brothers (Celadet and Sureyya) in Syria in 1927. The organisation committee boasted some prominent intellectuals, including Memduh Selim, whose life inspired Mehmed Uzun's novel *Bîra Qederê* (The Well of Destiny, 1995), as well as Kadri and Cemil Paşazade (1891-1973) and Şükrü Mehmet Sekban (1881-1960). The organisation, compared to *Azadi* Organisation of the Sheikh Said Rebellion, was effective

aimed to cleanse the Kurdish lands from the Turkish forces. The rebels declared a "Kurdish Republic" but were crushed by the Turkish military in September 1930. As Hamit Bozarslan points out, the massive coercion and symbolic violence used to crush and denigrate the rebellion, including "the imposition of special military rule, installation of a General Inspectorate, massacres, cartoons humiliating not only chiefs of the rebellion[56] but the Kurds as a whole," became the hallmarks of domination between the state and the Kurds ("Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey" 187).

As Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow point out, 18 rebellions broke out between 1924 and 1938 and 16 of them involved Kurds (100). The Mount Ararat Rising, however, "was significant because it marked the first time that a secular nationalist organisation led a Kurdish rebellion" (Entessar 85). The rebellion, nonetheless, like the ones it followed and preceded (the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1924 and the Dersim Rebellion of 1937-1938), was portrayed in the Turkish media and the novels as primarily reactionary and religious in nature rather than nationalist. This approach reflected the state discourse regarding the Kurdish insurgencies (Jwaideh 2006). As Welat Zeydanlıoğlu indicates, "[t]he revolts were interpreted and represented as the will to re-introduce the Ottoman order and as a reactionary threat to the 'civilising reforms' and the consolidation of the power of the modern Turkish state" ("The White Turkish Man's Burden" 8). These insurgencies substantially affected the formation of the nation-state, the progress of democratisation, and the internal and external power relations in Turkey.

and issued many pamphlets regarding the situation of Kurds in Turkey, distributing them around Europe and the United States. *Xoybûn* ceased its activities in the aftermath of the Mount Ararat Uprising.

[56] In his *Hoybûn Örgütü ve Ağrı Ayaklanması* (*Xoybûn* Organisation and the Mount Ararat Uprising, 1998), Rohat Alakom gives some striking examples of caricatures issued in newspapers during the Mount Ararat Uprising. Full of pornographic violence and humiliating expressions, these caricatures depict Kurds as puppets whose strings are held by foreign states and powers, which is a general theme stressed in both state discourse on the Kurdish question and many of the novels discussed in this chapter.

In this historico-political context, Esat Mahmut Karakurt's text appears among a collection of novels that address what would be referred to in the Turkish state discourse as the East question [*Doğu sorunu*] and later on as the "Kurdish question." The first of these novels were written by populist authors[57] who were radical supporters of the Republican regime and its reforms, and each novel focused on a particular Kurdish rebellion. Halide Edip Adıvar's *Zeyno'nun Oğlu* (Zeyno's Son, first serialised in *Vakit* newspaper between 1926 and 1927 and later published as a book in 1928), which was a sequel to *Kalp Ağrısı* (Heartache, first serialised in *Vakit* newspaper in 1924 and published as a book in the same year), centres its story in the background of the Sheikh Said Rebellion. Mükerrem Kâmil Su's *Sevgim ve Istırabım* (My Love and Misery, 1938) takes place during the early days of the Mount Ararat Uprising. Barbaros Baykara's *Dersim 1937* (Dersim 1937, 1974) focuses, appropriately, on the Dersim Rebellion of 1937.

All of these novels were written at a time when the state discourse denied the existence of Kurds, and each novel was constructed around this very discourse. This discourse, with the help of the novels, "generated a persistent image of the Kurds as culturally backward, socially tribal, religiously fanatic, economically lagging and an internal threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey" (Zeydanlıoğlu, "The White Turkish Man's Burden" 8). Kurdishness, in these novels, "was defined as a feudal ethnos (representative of atrocity and reactionism), and a negative atavism which was opposing Turkish ethnos (representative of civilisation, honesty, and revolution), and thus needed to be terminated" (Bozarslan, "Kürt Milliyetçiliği ve Kürt Hareketi" 848). According to Alan, the English portrayal of colonial India, in which English writers depicted some of

[57] As Ömer Türkeş points out, Kemalist ideology of modernisation received the biggest support from popular genres and populist writers, while more serious literature remained silent ("Toplum ve Kimlik" 847).

the discontent and insurgencies of Indians as movements whose leaders were fanatical "*molla*s," repeats itself in the Kurdish context ("Di Edebiyata Kurdî Ya Modern" 350). In that respect, the depiction of Shaikh Şemun in *Yezidin Kızı* (Yazid's Daughter, 1939), Shaikh M in *Zeyno'nun Oğlu*, Shaikh Fuat in *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, and Shaikh Said in *Cemo* (Cemo, 1966) as extremists, is not so surprising: "If it was not for these extremists there would be neither rebels nor the deceived fools that follow them" (Alan, "Di Edebiyata Kurdî Ya Modern" 350).

Since the early 2000's, the number of novels that narrate a love story between Kurdish and Turkish characters has increased dramatically. This time, in addition to the typical scenario in which a Kurdish woman—usually an educated female guerrilla—and a Turkish military officer fall in love, a new theme with altered gender positions appeared. With PKK's movement in their historical and political background, these novels generally approach the Kurds and their demands with less hostility. In some cases, like Filiz Aygündüz's *Kaç Zil Kaldı Örtmenim?* (Turkish Teacher, Kurdish Love,[58] 2011) and Mehmet Eroğlu's *Fay Kırığı 3: Rojin* (Fault Line Trilogy, Volume 3: Rojin, 2013), the Kurds, their demands, and the Kurdish movement are approached even sympathetically. There are novels, however, especially Ebru Gökçen Emre's *Aynı Güneşin Çocukları* (The Children of the Same Sun, 2008) and Mehmet Korkmaz's *Teğmenin Aşkı* (Lieutenant's Love, 2014), in which the discourse and the approach dominant in the early Republican novels remain as they ever were. Another novel by Osman Gazi Kandemir entitled *Gelincik: Bir PKK'lı ile Türk Subayının Aşkı* (The Poppy: Love of a PKK Guerrilla and a Turkish Military Officer, 2014) could be positioned between the two extremes: the same

[58] The original title of the novel, which is a question commonly asked by primary school children in Turkey who are looking to waste class time until they can go back to home, is difficult to translate literally; hence my loose translation here.

love theme appears but the novel is written with a proper knowledge of the Kurds and their demands, even if these are not fully acknowledged.

Returning to Karakurt's novel, however, when we situate the story in its political and historical context, what appears as a love story in the times of a rebellion reveals itself to be a solution to the most resilient social and political problem in Turkey, namely, the Kurdish question. This narrative of love and/or marriage between a Kurdish woman and a Turkish military officer not only symbolically puts an end to the Kurdish question[59] but also, mostly through these female Kurdish characters, opens a convenient space for state propaganda in the very hectic and precarious time of nation-state formation and the imposition of the Republican revolutions. The most important feature and move of Karakurt's story and other novels with the same topic is the merging of the collective, social and political, into exceedingly individualised particularity using narrative strategies of symbolisation and the constraint of the collective.

To elucidate this point, however, I should turn to the social level, the second horizon in the Jamesonian model, where the thematic symbolism of the individual text, Karakurt's novel, expands to apply to the social order and turns into a collective struggle between state power and a subjected ethnicity. In Karakurt's text, the primarily antagonistic collective discourses of these two agents could be encapsulated in the concept of ethnic orientalism. Written in a period when "[e]thnic assimilation rather than civic integration was clearly the order of the day" (Kirişçi and Winrow 103), *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, like the other novels mentioned above, projects the Kurds and Kurdishness

[59] In fact, for people who live outside the Kurdish region or have no connection with Kurds, the suppression of Kurdish rebellions marked the end of the Kurdish question in a literal sense. Vedat Türkali (1919-2016), a prominent leftist Turkish writer who had always been sympathetic to Kurdish demands, once stated that "when the rebellions were suppressed, it was as if the Kurdish question ended as well. An illusion was created in which everyone was proud and happy to be a Turk. […] As for us, I was a man who had a connection with the Turkish Communist Party; I was not looking at the issue from Kemalist perspective. Even I, however, like everyone else, was under the illusion that the Kurdish question was finished" (Uzun, *Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 77).

as the Orient of the new Republic. In his article "The White Turkish Man's Burden: Orientalism, Kemalism, and the Kurds in Turkey," Zeydanlıoğlu argues that "the state sponsored knowledge production and journalistic accounts in this period constructed the rebellious Kurds as the representatives of the dark Middle Ages and the Turkish Army as symbolising the embodiment of Enlightenment" ("The White Turkish Man's Burden" 9). This, Zeydanlıoğlu points out, is a shared feature of postcolonial nationalist elites—and, one might add, Kemalist ideology—in the Muslim world and elsewhere, who "have largely operated on Orientalist assumptions in the realisation of their nationalist and authoritarian internal civilising missions […] through the justification derived from the teleology of progress and modernity" ("The White Turkish Man's Burden" 3). Karakurt's novel and similar novels, then, operationalize these Orientalist assumptions. This internal orientalism, along with the Kemalist ideology that give it its particular flavour and the colonialism that has fed it, [60] perpetuates the same image of Kurds and their demands.

As an illustration of this phenomenon, we see in *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* that the Kurdish town where the Turkish army is located is a medieval town with houses made of animal manure and extremely narrow and muddy streets (7). The narrator notes that "not only the people but the air of this place is also wild" [Buranın, yalnız insanları değil, havası da vahşi] (13). At one point in the novel, when his commander sees Adnan disguised as a Kurdish man to infiltrate rebels' lines, he tells the general that Adnan "looks just like African savages" (47). The general and all the others burst into laughter upon seeing his outfits. They, however, do not find Adnan's moustache and beard long enough. When the general says that he still finds Adnan's face way too valuable and

[60] To name but one instance of this state discourse which has found its mouthpieces in every period in modern Turkey, see Esat Bozkurt, Minister of Justice in the Kemalist state in the 1930s: "We live in a country called Turkey, the freest country in the world. As your deputy, I feel I can express my real convictions without reserve: I believe that the Turk must be the only lord, the only master of this country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock can have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves" (Vali, "Genealogies of the Kurds" 98).

meaningful [manalı] to be a Kurd's face, Adnan grab some mud and smears it on his face (52).

The same symbolic violence occurs in other novels as well. Kurdish women are mostly portrayed as the "slaves" of the Turkish soldiers, whether for the bond of love or admiration and loyalty.[61] In Mükerrem Kâmil Su's *Sevgim ve Istırabım* the unnamed Kurdish young woman who finds the Turkish war pilot Metin and heals his wounds follows him everywhere for years with the loyalty of a slave (117). Halide Edip Adıvar's *Zeyno'nun Oğlu*, likewise, is rife with belittling descriptions of Kurds. The novel is centred on Turkish major Hasan's affair with a Kurdish cleaning lady, Zeyno. Hasan's interest in Zeyno fades quickly, but Zeyno continues to love Hasan desperately. "Hasan was a superman to her. She would obey his desires and live beneath his feet. To ask anything for herself never crossed her mind. The baby in her stomach was a part from that superman" (59).[62] To Hasan, however, this Kurdish woman is "a mute, a devotee, and a helpless animal" (203). Zeyno and Hasan's son Haso is depicted as a perfect mix of whatever he has inherited from his Turkish father (wisdom, modesty, dignity, and so forth) and his Kurdish mother (beauty, naivety, loyalty, and so forth).[63] The Kurds are repeatedly portrayed as feverish, unstable, and clamorous; their language, Kurdish, in comparison to the elegant and soft tune of Turkish, sounds like an

[61] This feature can be detected in the representation of Greek women in Turkish literature as well. Ömer Türkeş states that in the Turkish novels, the Turk-Greek confrontation is a confrontation between higher and lower races. In these novels, "Greek women cannot resist the physical, intellectual, and moral superiority of Turkish men […]" ("Millî Edebiyattan Milliyetçi Romanlara" 820).

[62] Hasan, onun için, arzularına itaat edilir, ölünceye kadar ayaklarının altında yaşanır, fevkalbeşer bir erkekti. Ondan kendisi için bir şey istemek, zihninden bile geçmemişti. Fakat karnındaki çocuk da bu fevkalbeşer insanın bir parçasıydı.

[63] This novel shows an excellent example of what Vickers labels the "battle of nursery," which "is about ensuring that children born are bred in culturally appropriate ways" (Peterson 66). Adıvar, throughout her novel, portrays an incredible battle over Haso, who is left with his Kurdish mother. In order to save Haso from the Kurdish cultural environment in which he is confined, Adıvar creates another woman, Istanbullian Zeyno, a well-educated Turkish woman, as a second mother for Haso, even though her own Kurdish mother, who is also called Zeyno, is alive.

uproar (137). The racial difference is emphasised to the degree that friends of Major Hasan, when they see Haso for the first time, immediately figure out that he might be Hasan's son: "That child had a pride and self-respect, whose backbone knows no bending for material or immaterial [interest], and which was above the miserable circle he was living in. He seems to be an offspring of a thoughtful [used in sense that is close to "being reasonable and rational"] race rather than an ardent one. I wonder if his father is a Turk?" (203-4).[64]

The contradictory statements and the ambiguity of these texts, from another angle, disclose a foundational quality of this ethnic orientalism, which such scholars as Homi K. Bhabha and Robert Young have discussed in the larger contexts of orientalism and colonialism. Although the Kurds are pictured as brutal, backward, lacking intelligence or morality, and so forth, the texts abound in atrocities directed at them by Turkish forces. In Karakurt's novel, Turkish soldiers crush the bandits' heads "like crushing the head of snakes" (11); one of the many scenes in which the Turkish army bombards the rebels is depicted as "[Kurdish] people in grotesque outfits running around miserably while making weird noises" (30). In Barbaros Baykara's novel, *Dersim 1937,* a Kurdish rebel repeatedly begs the Turkish major Kemal's pardon in self-humiliating words: "I will eat what you defecate" [Pohunu yirim gumandan!] (106). The major[65] cries, in a melodramatic outburst, "The foolish offspring of the fools! The bastards of the demon!

[64] O çocukta arka kemiği maddî mânevî inhina etmeyi bilmeyen, kendi sefil muhitinin çok üstünden bakan bir gurur ve izzetinefis vardı. Çocuk ateşli olmaktan ziyade düşünceli bir cinsin yavrusuna benziyordu. Acaba babası Türk müydü?

[65] The same major, in order to force the Dersim civilians who are Alevi to come out of the cave they take refuge in, uses rabbits, asserting that Alevi people hate rabbits. When rabbits enter a place Alevi people run out of that place as if they have seen the demon. What follows is a very belittling picture of 30 or more women, children and men running out of the cave, crying and stricken with hysteria and nausea (Baykara 227). When the Kurds are Alevi, in other words, the level of symbolic violence escalates.

Did you suppose that this country has no one to claim and protect it?" and later "You will not be able to divide my beloved Turkey…" (123-4).[66]

Another quintessential discordant trait of ethnic orientalism discourse in these novels is the treatment of the Kurdish women as the centres of both repulsion and desire. Bhabha's use of the term "ambivalence" in postcolonial psychoanalysis as "a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and its opposite (also simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action)" (Young 161)[67] captures well the Kurdish female-Turkish male relationship in the literature. In Karakurt's novel, the female protagonist is at first never referred to by her name but is instead called "the slut," "female snake," "the wretched slut," "the bitch" and so forth. It is not until Adnan and the woman make love that readers are informed that her name is Zeynep. "It is obvious that according to the writer, Karakurt, the way for having an identity, for Kurdish women, passes through the bed of Turkish soldiers" (Zeynep 23).

In *Dersim 1937*, the wife of the rebels' leader, Besi, repeatedly slaughters innocent people ferociously. The pornographic violence of these scenes always includes some male observers who desire her desperately, including the narrator as well as the Turkish major: "The blood that squirted suddenly, painted the scarf covering Besi's head red. The dagger in her tiny and well figured hand hit with speed and power again and again…" (33).[68] In one incident, during a gunfight, Besi calls Major Kemal and says: "There is no escape

[66] Ahmak oğlu ahmaklar! Şeytanın dölleri! Bu memleketi sahipsiz mi sandınız? Parçalayamıyacaksınız Türkiyemi…

[67] Young states that by adding psycho-analysis to Said's Foucauldian analysis, Bhabha's hermeneutic move "called attention to the moment in which Said briefly, but in an undeveloped way, set up the possibility of Orientalism working at two conflictual levels, […] how colonial discourse of whatever kind operated not only as an instrumental construction of knowledge but also according to the ambivalent protocols of fantasy and desire" (161).

[68] Bir anda fışkıran kan Besi'nin başındaki puşu kırmızıya boyadı. Ufacık ve biçimli elindeki hançer, hızlı ve kuvvetli darbeler halinde indi üst üste…

from this. Do not waste your soldiers for nothing. If you surrender, we will make you the military head of the Kurdish state." Kemal's response to this is as follows: "You cannot found a state, but only lay a bed for your libertines. Shall I also come along Besi? […] What are doing with those giant men, Besi? You won't say I am telling their fortunes in this darkness, I suppose. Are you cheating on your runaway husband?" (209-10).[69]

A classic example of ambivalence appears in Halide Edip's *Kalp Ağrısı* (Heartache, 1924) and its sequel *Zeyno'nun Oğlu*. In *Kalp Ağrısı*, shortly after a fling with Zeyno, who is nicknamed "Kürt şeftalisi" (the Kurdish Peach) among the soldiers of Turkish regiment in Diyarbakır, Hasan becomes weary of his sexual liaison:

> Hasan, very soon, became weary of this primitive love, which was burning like the hellish malaria of Diyarbakır at the beginning. The skin that had smelled like cinnamon and the spice of exotic lands, narcotic and maddening during the first contacts, now was reminding him of the sweat smells of *hamals* (porters) he would sense while he was playing outside during religious holidays. Having smelled it in crowded places during Ramadan nights, this was the smell that he did not forget and tried to avoid its disgust. The eternal flame of her dark cheeks now was the ordinary redness of a villager to him. Her black eyes that had squinted in blurry and hot moments while looking at him in a dog's acquiescence, now was like gummy eyes of simple porter boys. (233)[70]

In this context, ambivalence (in Bhabha's use of the term) embedded in the novelistic discourse carries gender relations to the very heart of social struggles and cultural contestations. From this perspective, ethnic orientalism, just like orientalism and

[69] [Besi] – Bunun kurtuluşu yoktur. Askerini, neferini boşuna kırdırtma. Teslim olursan, seni Kürt devleti ordusunun başına getiririz. […] [Kemal] – Sen devlet değil, zamparalarının yatağını kurarsın. Ben de gelem mi Besi? […] Yanındaki izbandut gibi heriflerle ne yapıyorsun Besi! Her halde bu karanlıkta adamların falına bakıyorum demezsin. İp, kazık kaçkını kocana, boynuz mu taktırırsın?

[70] Evvelâ Diyarbakır'ın cehennem gibi sıtması kadar yakan bu iptidaî aşk, Hasan'ı çok çabuk bıktırdı. Kendisini ilk temaslarda bayıltan, çıldırtan, tarçın gibi, sıcak memleketlerin baharatı gibi kokan ten, ona bayramlarda oynarken hamalların hacıyağıyla karışık ter kokularını hatırlatıyordu. Kalabalık yerlerde kuvvetle yayılan bu [koku], ramazan geceleri kokuları arasında unutmadığı ve istikrahla kaçtığı bir kokuydu. Kızın koyu sıcak yanaklarının daimî alevi şimdi ona adi bir köylü kırmızılığı gibi geliyordu. Biraz bulanık ve sıcak dakikalarında şaşılaşan siyah gözlerini, uzun kirpikleri arasında kendisine bir köpek uysallığıyla bakarken, alelâde küfeci çocukların çipil gözlerine benzetiyordu.

colonialism at the macro level, maps ethnic boundaries onto gender differences. Thus, as Yeğenoğlu notes, in order not to "fall short in recognizing how representations of cultural and sexual difference are constitutive of each other," "mapping the discourse of Orientalism onto the phallocentric discourse of femininity" is essential (73).

When we turn to the novels under analysis with an eye towards the representation of Kurdish women, two points come to the fore with respect to ethnic orientalism. First, "when the topic is Kurds, rebels, and women, the representation is always framed as bringing civilisation and modernisation" (Zeynep 22), thus saving the Kurdish women from "barbarous" Kurdish men. Second, in these novels, the Kurdish woman who is submitted to the sexual potency of the Turkish officer represents the Turkish power's taking possession of the Kurdish geography (Ronahi 374).[71] By this symbolic move, both the rebellion and the Kurdish question are extinguished.

For a more comprehensive understanding of the motives behind such treatment and its political ramifications, Anthias and Yuval-Davis's summary of the role of women in the national and ethnic process in general is helpful. According to them, there are five major ways in which women are involved in ethnic and national processes:

1. as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;
2. as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;
3. as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;
4. as signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories;
5. as participants in national, political and military struggles. (cited in Walby 236-37)

This list explains every aspect of the representation of the Kurdish women in this literature. By marrying the Kurdish protagonist, most of whom actively participated in

[71] As Ozlem Galip shows in her study of 100 novels in Kurmanji, *Imagining Kurdistan: Identity, Culture and Society* (2015) this identification of the Kurdish land with women is by no means restricted to Turkish novels; it was a common phenomenon in Kurdish ones as well. In Galip's analyses of Kurmanji novels, both Kurdistan and the beloved woman are depicted as entities to save, kill, struggle, and die for (174-179).

the rebellion, the Turkish writer kills several birds with one stone. When Kurdish women, "as the boundary markers between different national, ethnic and religious collectivities" (Kandiyoti 435), deny their ethnic identity and marry Turkish soldiers, Kurdishness as an ethnic and national reality is extinguished. This is in line with the fact that intergenerational continuity and the transmission of ethnic, religious, racial identity and all the other axes of "difference" is first and foremost bound to women who are usually seen as "cultural carriers" (Peterson 68). They are not only biological "producers" of children and thus "'bearers of the collective' within boundaries of nations;" they are also the active agents of what Vicker's call "the battle of nursery," which "involves the ideological reproduction of group members" under heteropatriarchal conditions, structures, and power relations—thanks to their crucial task as primary educators and socialisers of chldren (Peterson 67).

The ultimately literal part of the symbolic meaning of marriage between the Kurdish woman and the Turkish soldier is that it puts an end to the biological continuity of Kurds. This addresses a very common concern in Turkey regarding the very high birth rate among the Kurdish community and its possible consequences in the future.[72] One should add that Kurdish women, as pointed out also by Kandiyoti, from the aspect of cultural and ideological continuity and transmission, are burdened with an even more crucial task: that of preserving the Kurdish language (435). As Deniz Kandiyoti and many other scholars point out, this is partly because "a Kurdish woman in Turkey is less likely to learn Turkish than a Kurdish man who comes into more frequent contact with the dominant culture through compulsory military service, greater access to schooling, dealings with the state bureaucracy or work experiences" (435).

[72] Yuval-Davis points to a striking anecdote, in the similar context of Palestine, where Yaser Arafat allegedly said, "The Palestinian woman who bears yet another Palestinian every ten months […] is a biological time bomb threatening to blow up Israel from within" (16-17).

An important question emerges here regarding the voice of the Kurdish women and of Kurds in general. Not surprisingly, Kurdish women rarely talk in the novels, and when they do, their voices bear the official stamp of the nation-state ideology. In Karakurt's novel, for instance, moved by Adnan's kind treatment and already madly in love with him, Zeynep shouts hysterically at her father and the rebels:

> All of you, from the first one to the last, came to these places where even eagles and wolves are afraid to wander, to look for adventure and fill your pockets with money. Were you going to establish your state in these mountains? With which civilisation, which influence, which power? If one day they [Turks] get angry with you and, God forbid, tell you to take your sinister mountains and found your state, and abandon you, what would you do? You would have start to eat one another like starving mules on the snow. […] Empty your pockets, all of you! You are scared and ashamed, are you not? Because your pockets are full of English money. (122-23)[73]

The same Zeynep, when taken to court for causing the death of Turkish soldiers before she met Adnan, describes herself as a Turk and defends herself on the ground of being misled and cheated by a man, who has deserted her for another woman. After that, feeling an overwhelming drive to revenge on men in general, she joins her father's forces. She confesses that she is not only ashamed of her actions but of her humanity (162).

The absolute dominance of Kemalist ideology throughout the novel allows no other voices to be heard. This univocality of the text thus eliminates any possibility of ideological, ethnic, and sexual confrontations of dialogism and heteroglossia. The only way to restore the response of the silenced resistance, resentment, and subversive strategies, as Jameson suggests, is to work through the silences, gaps, and censors, which linger on the ambivalences and contradictions pointed out above.

[73] Kartalların, kurtların bile dolaşmaya korktuğu bu yerlerde hepiniz, baştan başa hepiniz, macera aramaya, cep doldurmaya geldiniz. Bu dağlarda mı devlet kuracaktınız?.. Hangi medeniyet, hangi nüfuz, hangi selahiyetinizle?.. Bir gün size kızıp da maazallah 'Alın bu menhus dağlarınızı, kurun bakalım devletinizi' deyip başınızdan çekilseydiler, ne yapardınız? Karın üstünde aç kalmış katırlar gibi, birbirinizi yemeye kalkardınız. […] Hepiniz çıkarın ceplerinizi dışına bakayım! Korkarsınız, utanırsınız değil mi? Çünkü ağzına kadar İngiliz lirası doludur.

I discuss this point concerning the univocality of the text in greater depth in the section of this chapter devoted to Uzun's novel. For now, it is important to point out that despite my characterisation of the novel's features as identical to those of orientalist and colonialist discourses, there are two aspects of this ethnic orientalism that do not fit squarely into orientalism and colonialism. First, in these novels, as in the state discourses of their eras, there is an absolute denial of Kurdish entity as a whole. In Karakurt's novel, for instance, the rebels are referred to as bandits [*şaki*], looters [*çapulcu*], stateless people [*vatansızlar*], savages [*vahşiler*], outlaws [*eşkiya*], and so forth, whereas the word "Kurd" is not used even once.[74]

Second, orientalism, as elucidated by Edward Said, goes beyond the construction of an ambiguous and pejorative discourse about the other/orient; it is embedded in the relationship between power and knowledge as seen in the entire history of Oriental Studies and related knowledge (academia, congresses, books, encyclopaedias, journals, travel writings and so forth). Note, for instance, that the first Kurdish Language and Literature Department in Turkey was inaugurated in 2011. Herein, the peculiar character of the Kurdish case emerges: the absolute lack of awareness and the omission of investigation on the part of those holding power.[75] The power/knowledge nexus Said borrows from Foucault does not perfectly map onto the Kurdish-Turkish case. Veering between apathy and hysterical chauvinism, neither the novels in question nor the

[74] Yeğen describes this strategy well: "despite denying the existence of the Kurds, the Turkish state nevertheless had to 'think,' 'speak' and 'speculate' on the Kurdish question. Hence, many texts were produced regarding the Kurdish question. However, the distinguishing characteristic of these texts was a deep 'silence' on the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question" ("The Kurdish Question" 555).

[75] Ziya Gökalp's (1876-1924) posthumous work *Kürt Aşiretleri Hakkında İçtimai Tetkikler* (Social Studies about Kurdish Tribes), which presents his reports on the social structures of Kurdish tribes, stands as an important exception. Gökalp, one of the most influential ideologues of Turkish nationalism, however, is a very controversial figure in the history of Turkish intellectuals. Born and raised in Diyarbakır in the Kurdish region, he identified as Kurdish, although he never explicitly admitted this. "[H]is identification with Turkishness was never confined to pure ethnicity but rather defined according to culture, religion, and self-identification" (Uzer, "The Kurdish Identity of Turkish Nationalist Thinkers" 399).

institutional spheres of knowledge production had shown or dared to show any interest in the Kurds in Turkey.[76] The nation-state and its academic and intellectual circles were so busy with the denial of Kurdish entity that knowledge had hardly been needed or applied in these instances of ethnic orientalism.

Adressing this question in detail in *Antikürdolojiden Kürdolojiye Giden Yol ve İsmail Beşikçi* (The Path from Anti-Kurdology to Kurdology and İsmail Beşikçi), Malmisanij argues that Kurdish studies in Turkey during the 20th century could be grouped as anti-Kurdology [*antikürdoloji*] and secret-Kurdology [*gizli kürdoloji*]. Secret Kurdology consists of works produced for military and bureaucratic purposes. These works (mostly reports) remained confined to concerning govermental or military services and institutes. Compared to the works of anti-Kurdology, these reports were more accurate and realistic.

Anti-kurdology, on the other hand, refers to the studies conducted in Turkey under such motivation as to deny or disprove the existence of the Kurds, their culture, and their language. In these works the Kurds are portrayed as mountain Turks who have long forgotten their Turkish roots; their language, likewise, is primitive, with a vocabulary of 30-300 words. The most prominent example of such works is *Kürdler: Tarihi ve İctimai Tedkikat* (The Kurds: Historical and Social Analysis, 1918)[77] by Naci İsmail Pelister. This work, however, was introduced to the public under the name of a scholar named Doctor Friç from the Berlin Oriental Institute. There existed, however, no such scholar or work from the Berlin Oriental Institute (Malmisanij, *Antikürdolojiden Kürdolojiye* 12). Apparently, the Turkish authorities enacted this scheme to sound more convincing.

[76] One need only recall the case of İsmail Beşikçi, a Turkish sociologist who served 17 years in prison for his writings on Kurds. The publication and circulation of his works were banned in Turkey until recently.

[77] Other well-known examples of these *anti*-Kurdology studies are Şükrü Mehmet Sekban's *Kürt Sorunu* (The Kurdish Question, 1970) and Şükrü Kaya Seferoğlu ve Halil Kemal Türközü's *101 Soruda Türkler'in Kürt Boyu* (An Introduction of the Kurdish Clan of the Turks in 101 Question, 1982).

From this clash of ethnic/national claims within a shared code, a conflict that could be characterised as the imposition of the frames of gender and national differences, we pass now to the ultimate semantic horizon. In this horizon, the task of interpretation is to work through symbolic messages transmitted by various fictional modes, that is to say, to map out the latent meaning of chosen forms, thus revealing the residual content of the form. To this end, it will be helpful to examine Karakurt's authorship in general, with a specific eye towards his historical literary context and the formal and stylistic choices he favoured.

Karakurt came onto the literary scene at a time (1930-1950) "when the popular Turkish novel was following mainly two paths, namely love stories and historical novels" (Yıldız 106). The novel was playing "an important role in motivating the general public to read and to make them adopt the principles and revolutions of the new regime after the Alphabet Reform in 1928" (Oktay 125-6). In such a context, Karakurt's success lies in combining what Umberto Eco calls "tale engineering" with the social engineering of the Republican period. To this end, in Karakurt's novels, patriotic and heroic feelings coalesce with a love story that makes them even more appealing. Indeed, his entire oeuvre bears the same compositional stamp: an absolute integration of the collective and the individual. In his novels, a social or historical event is always used as the setting of a love story blended with a spy narrative and adventure. Thus, Karakurt's works succeed in the integration of committed literature into "escapism," which is "typical of the escape machine geared for the entertainment of the masses" (Eco 161). "The moral fantasy of the romance," which, like in many stories, "is that of love triumphant and permanent, overcoming all obstacles and difficulties" (Cawelti 42), is always accompanied by another moral fantasy at the political level, namely, the saving of the nation.

Renowned Turkish novelist Tahsin Yücel (who was also a student of Karakurt in Galatasaray High School) points out that "regardless of the setting, those who have read one or two Esat Mahmut Karakurt's novels never feel unacquainted" with the story (11). Although they differ in historical, social, and geographical backgrounds, Karakurt's novels entail one and the same formula, the elements of which are arranged in an exact order. In *Vahşi Bir Kız Sevdim, Dağları Bekleyen Kız, Son Gece, Ankara Ekspresi, Erikler Çiçek Açtı, and Kadın İsterse*, the story lines are very similar: a devoted and patriotic Turkish military officer engages in some impossible mission to stop a demonic plan devised by foreign powers or ethnic others. While fighting or spying heroically and voluntarily risking his life, he meets a foreign woman who is participating—sometimes by choice, sometimes by force—in the villains' plan. He steals this woman's heart along with her support to defeat the enemy. The reader, in this scheme, "finds himself immersed in a game of which he knows the pieces and the rules—and perhaps the outcome—and draws pleasure simply from following the minimal variations by which victor realizes his objective" (Eco 160).[78]

Let us now turn to *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* to identify the modes of emplotment—*i.e.*, "the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind" (White, *Metahistory* 7)—in which an ideological

[78] The general structure of Karakurt's novels, from this perspective, is very similar to those of Ian Fleming's James Bond narratives. As Umberto Eco shows in his work "Narrative Structures in Fleming," each of Fleming's stories can be summarised thusly: "Bond is sent to a given place to avert a 'science-fiction' plan by a monstrous individual of uncertain origin and definitely not English who, making use of his organisational or productive activity, not only earns money, but helps the cause of the enemies of the West. In facing this monstrous being, Bond meets a woman who is dominated by him and frees her from her past, establishing with her an erotic relationship interrupted by capture by the Villain and by torture. But Bond defeats the Villain, who dies horribly, and rests from his great efforts in the arms of the woman, though he is destined to lose her" (160). This scheme, however, is universal, and its roots could be traced back to the earliest narratives. John G. Cawelti's remarks on adventure and romance narratives as "formula stories" is worth mention. "The central fantasy of the adventure story," according to Cawelti, "is that of the hero–individual or group–overcoming obstacles and dangers and accomplishing some important and moral mission. Often, though not always, the hero's trials are the result of the machinations of a villain, and, in addition, the hero frequently receives, as a kind of side benefit, the favours of one or more attractive young ladies" (39-40).

message is reified. It has already been noted that, like most of Karakurt's novels, *Dağları Bekleyen Kız* has a structure of romance narrative. Romance, as one of the major modes of emplotment, is "a drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness […]" (White, *Metahistory* 9). In order to attend to this thematic content, romance adopts a narrative regime which, as Northrop Frye puts it, "follows its general dialectic structure, which means that subtlety and complexity are not much favoured" (195). The binary system of opposition, manifested in Karakurt's novel, which attributes all the bad, vicious, dark, fanatic, uncivil, brutal and so forth qualities to rebels/Kurds, and their good antonyms to the Turks, follows naturally from romantic emplotment, in which the world is a battleground between good and evil. So too does Karakurt's simplification of one of the most precarious questions of modern Turkey. From this vantage point, the text appears as an exemplary of quest-romance, defined by Frye as "the search of libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but still contain that reality" (193).

In this light, what marks the generic and stylistic choices of Karakurt appear to be escapism, which could be identified as one of the decisive qualities of popular writing. A journalist himself, Karakurt knew very well how to foster the popular imagination best: the juxtaposition of journalistic factualism and novelistic fabrication. This is probably why *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, like many of novels mentioned above, is "a veritable traffic-jam of competing fictional modes" (Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* 126). The whole novel is written like a newspaper article about a sensational incident, but since this news is not only meant to entertain but also to convince and manipulate, the journalistic strategies of truth-making and proving are pressed into service.

The following two passages are exemplary of Karakurt. The first, taken from the novel, depicts a scene in which a comrade of Adnan, Ahmet, who has lived in the rebels' midst for moths, tells Adnan about the rebels:

> One is ashamed of his humanity among them. The degree of their ferocity, cruelty, and dishonour is beyond measure. Even when they kill someone, their concern is not the life they take but the cost of bullet they use. They have neither God nor religion nor faith. They do not believe in anything. […] All they eat is a piece of raw meat and bulgur. They all have five to ten wives. Some of them still choke baby girls to death. […] They live in holes they dig in the ground or under a rock base. They know neither military service nor patria. All they recognize and worship is their sheikh. What he orders is the only rule. As I said, these are not people. These creatures belong to a species that is difficult to even name. (67)[79]

Compare the above with an excerpt from an article written by Karakurt during his visit to Salih Pasha's headquarters in the Mount Ararat region and published in *Akşam* newspaper (1 September 1930):

> They could more or less be called savages. They have been ignorant of everything in their entire lives. All they know is the sky and the rocks. They live just like a bear cub does. Those in the Mount Ararat are of this sort. Now, you imagine how wild should they be to lead a life of a beast on these steep cliffs where even a bear would not dare to walk. They know nothing about compassion. They are bloodthirsty, aggressive, wild, and ferocious. […] They are very vile; if they capture you they would not kill you with a bullet. They would gouge your eyes out, cut your nose, pull off your nails, and only then kill you! (cited in Türkeş, "Millî Edebiyattan Milliyetçi Romanlara" 821)[80]

[79] İnsan bunların arasında, insanlığından nefret ediyor. Vahşetin, insafsızlığın, alçaklığın bu derecesi görülmemiştir. Adamı öldürürken, karşısındakinin hayatını değil, yakacakları kurşunun parasını düşünüyorlar. Ne din var, ne iman var, ne Allah… Hiçbir şeye inandıkları yok. […] Yedikleri bir parça çiğ etle bulgur. Hepsinin beş-on karısı var. Hâlâ içlerinde kız çocuklarını boğanlar mevcut. […] Toprağın dibinde kazdıkları oyuklarda, mağaralarda, kaya diplerinde yaşarlar. Ne askerlik bilirler, ne vatan. Yalnız bir şey! Taptıkları, tanıdıkları her şeyleri şeyhtir. O, ne emrederse derhal olur. Dedim ya, bunlar insan değildir. Bunlar öyle bir nevi mahluklardır ki, isim vermek bile müşkül.

[80] [B]unlara aşağı yukarı vahşi denebilir. Hayatlarında hiçbir şeyin farkına varamamışlardır. Bütün bildikleri sema ve kayadır. Bir ayı yavrusu nasıl yaşarsa o da öyle yaşar. İşte Ağrı'dakiler bu nevidendir. Şimdi siz tasavvur edin; bir kurdun, bir ayının bile dolaşmaya cesaret edemediği bu yalçın kayaların üzerinde yırtıcı bir hayvan hayatı yaşayanlar ne derece vahşidirler. Hayatlarında acımanın manasını öğrenememişlerdir. Hunhar, atılgan, vahşi ve yırtıcıdırlar [...] Çok alçaktırlar, yakaladıkları takdirde sizi bir kurşunla öldürmezler. Gözünüzü oyarlar, burnunuzu keserler, tırnaklarınız sökerler ve öyle öldürürler!

Here, then, we see an obvious similarity between Karakurt's journalistic reporting and his fictitious writing. In *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, Karakurt uses newspaper reports, court reports, letters, telegrams, and written military orders, which likewise appear to blur the lines between journalism and fiction. In addition to these strategically minor formal choices, the novel has two major formal and narrative strands that are more appealing to popular imagination and taste: first, the story is narrated not in the cool consideration of the act of writing but instead in the interactive form of persuasive oratory. Second, the story comes across as though it were filmed onto paper rather than being a merely written account.[81]

Overall, then, I argue that both in content and in form, this oratory style and cinema-like presentation mode is clearly a marker of popular writing and culture in the age of capitalism. Karakurt's novels' popularity among the public, newspapers, and the movie industry of the time, as discussed earlier in this chapter, supports this conclusion. One should also keep in mind the function of mass cultural text "as the production of false consciousness and the symbolic reaffirmation of this or that legitimizing strategy" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 277), as well as the escapist/utopian nature of ideological texts. In short, these formal, structural, stylistic, and generic features all work together to emphasize a socio-symbolic message that omits reality and instead confirms the ideal state of affairs: the Turks/men lead and the Kurds/women happily follow.

With this socio-symbolic message pervading the text, the vastest and most ancient power relation (that between the sexes) exposes the ultimate historical meaning of the text, *i.e.,* the absent cause, the *Real*. The symbolic solution to the social contradiction in

[81] In the very beginning of the text, the setting is illustrated in a way that reminds us of a screenplay: "An autumn night… […] A dirty and thin rain drizzles. Mountains are covered with fog. From the depths come the cries of some wild animals. We are in a town of Karaköse" (7). In addition to this writing style, almost every incident is depicted like a scene from a cheap Hollywood movie, as if the narrator were crying repeatedly "action" or "cut."

the individual text—the gendered ethnic orientalism and its expression in popular romance narratives—is only a displaced aspect of this relationship, which I take to be "the eternal battle of man" to keep woman where she is. When disentangled from its individual, ethnic, immediate, and non-universal threads, there remains a single tangle, namely "gendered love." As a "structuring structure" (that is, something that can structure anything: ethnic relations, assimilation, patriarchal configurations and so forth), and one of the oldest arenas of power-relations, this love is ultimately a political concept in which state and ethnic community, modernisers and rebels, West and East, Turks and Kurds, material and private, and journalist factualism and romance are all configured in a gendered binary opposition, wherein the first terms always stand for man and the second for woman.

II. Disequilibrium between a Heartful of Light and a Countryful of Darkness: Mehmed Uzun's Ronî Mîna Evînê Tarî Mîna Mirinê

Mehmed Uzun is unquestionably one of the most popular Kurdish writers of all times. He was born in Siverek, a county of Urfa, a city in southeastern Turkey, in 1952. After graduating from high school, he went to Ankara to continue his education at a teachers' training college. Following the military coup in 1972, he was arrested and imprisoned in Ankara and Diyarbakır for two years before the military court sentenced him to eight years. He was set free in the same year by a general pardon, but jailed in 1977 once again for his political activities, including publication of the Kurdish journal *Rizgarî* (Liberty) (Ahmadzadeh, *Nation and Novel* 287). These two periods of imprisonment had an important impact on Uzun, as it was in prison that he gained knowledge of traditional Kurdish literature and folklore. It was also in prison that his nationalist feelings were born (Uzun, *Ziman û Roman* 10). This was not an uncommon experience, as Diyarbakır prison in this period served as a sort of university for many

Kurdish prisoners where they could "get to know the intellectual and cultural history of Kurds, read the national epic *Mem û Zîn* along with many other Kurdish books and writers which were brought into prison clandestinely" (Uzun, *Bir Dil Yaratmak* 129). When he was released after nearly eight months, Uzun fled from the country for Sweden. He was stripped of his Turkish citizenship in 1981 (Uzun, *Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 99) but returned to Diyarbakır, after a long battle with cancer, in July 2006 to spend his last days, dying October 7, 2007.

Uzun started his prolific writing career in Sweden and wrote numerous novels and essay collections. His first novel *Tu* (You, 1984) was mainly based on his prison experiences. In his second novel, *Rojêk Ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê* (A Day from Evdale Zeynike's Days, 1987), Uzun narrates the life of the famous Kurdish *dengbêj* Evdalê Zeynikê. This novel was followed by *Mirina Kalekî Rind* (The Death of an Old Rind, 1989), but it was with *Siya Evînê* (The Shadow of Love, 1991) and *Bîra Qederê* (The Well of Destiny, 1995) that Uzun started to attract attention from Kurdish and Turkish readers. These two novels tell stories of Kurdish intelligentsia in the beginning of the 20th century through the exilic figures of Memduh Selim and Celadet Alî Bedir Khan,[82] respectively. Written in the same style—a composition of photographic scenes with each chapter/scene telling a momentous turning point in the intellectual's life—*Siya Evînê* and *Bîra Qederê* recount unfortunate love adventures and failed political activities. But Uzun owes his popularity as a novelist mainly to his last novels, *Ronî Mîna Evînê, Tarî Mîna Mirinê* (Light Like Love, Dark Like Death, 1998) and *Hawara Dîcleyê* (The Call of Tigris, published in two volumes in 2002 and 2003). Being considered his *magnum opus*, this latter work tells the story of *Cizira Botan*, culturally and symbolically an important

[82] Memduh Selim, an exiled Kurdish literati from Turkish Kurdistan, was one of the founders of the *Xoybûn* organisation that organised the Mount Ararat Rising in 1927-1930.

part of northern Kurdistan, and its leader Mir Bedir Khan, coupled with the rich history of Mesopotamia.

The most notable aspect of Uzun's works is the significance of folklore, especially of the oral tradition and Kurdish bards, in the composition. In most of his novels, including *Siya Evînê*, *Bîra Qederê*, *Ronî Mîna Evînê*, and *Hawara Dîcleyê*, the story is narrated backwards.[83] Apart from the novels, Uzun published an anthology, *Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî* (Anthology of Kurdish Literature, two volumes, 1995) and a brief introduction to Kurdish literature, *Destpêka Edebiyata Kurdî* (An Introduction to Kurdish Literature, 1992). He also published essay collections, *Nar Çiçekleri* (Pomegranate Blossoms, 1996, in Turkish) and *Zincirlenmiş Zamanlar Zincirlenmiş Sözcükler* (Chained Times, Chained Words, 2002, in Turkish). His interviews were collected in *Ziman û Roman* (Language and the Novel, 1996), *Bir Dil Yaratmak* (To Create a Language, 1997, in Turkish), and *Küllerinden Doğan Dil ve Roman* (The Language and the Novel that Are Born out of Their Ashes, 2005, in Turkish). He was planning a novel about Erich Auerbach's life and times but died before he could write it.

In an interview conducted by Jean Claude Hussais and published in the Turkish translation of his anthology, Mehmed Uzun introduces himself by stating: "I am Kurdish, I am from Turkey. I am from Sweden. I am Scandinavian, I am universal. I am both a native of an enclosed area between Tigris and Euphrates, the two sacred rivers, and a cosmopolite who constantly moves around within various cultures, countries, and languages" (*Kürt Edebiyatı Antolojisi* 259). This claim of being universal and

[83] In these novels the story always starts at the point at which everything has finished, making memory and recollection the principal modes of narrative. Although the *dengbêj* tradition is an important factor in this narration style, "recalling" or "forcing oneself to recall" could be interpreted as an attempt to construct an alternative and collective history against the distorted official history. Uzun, in an interview, asserted that Kurdish culture depends on recollection. According to him, because the language is banned, oral narration plays an important role in remembering the past and its happenings (*Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 208).

multilingual and multicultural stands as one of the shared qualities of Uzun's novel characters. They are all presented as both Oriental—mostly Mesopotamian—and European. Selim Beg in *Siya Evînê,* for example, goes into exile with a luggage full of "Ehmedê Khani, Fîrdewsî, Omer Xayam, Montaigne, Descartes, La Fayette, Rousseau, Shakespeare, Voltaire; so to speak, the East and the West together" (32-33). The narrator expressly states in *Bîra Qederê* that the heroes' (Celadet Alî Bedir Khan and his brothers') manners are as much Kurdish and Eastern as European: "Their outfits, approaches, ideas, senses, and looks appear to be not so distant from European civilisation […] From the way they are dressed it is obvious that they as much belong to the world and civilisation of the East as of the West" (177).[84] It is said that in their home in Istanbul, the Bedir Khan brothers had Kurdish storytellers and *dengbêj*s along with French governesses and teachers. They would fall asleep listening to the tales of Mîr Mihemedê Hekqarî, a Kurdish *emir*, and La Fontaine (257).

Necmiye Alpay highlights this trait of Uzun's novel: "while meditating, on directly intellectual and social levels, about the problematics of creating his own work, Uzun thinks on the level of 'world literature' to analyse it with an eye towards his own problematics, which is rarely seen in the writers of 'national literatures'" (Uzun *Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 7). It is worth mentioning that Uzun's main critique of the Kurdish writers and poets preceding him is also based on their provincial mind-sets, parochial outlooks, and narrow impacts. Speaking of such earlier Kurdish writers as Cigerxwîn, Osman Sebri, Hejar, and Hêmin, Uzun says:

> [T]hey were all irreplaceable people. They were all altruistic writers who sacrificed their lives for the Kurdish language and Kurdish literature. But almost all of them were local and remote from the world. They did not

[84] Kinc û lixwekirina wan nêrîn, fikir, hîs û dîtinên wan jî diyar dikin; ew ne dûrî cîhan û medeniyeta ewrûpayê ne. […] Ji lixwekirina wan diyar e ku ew bi qasî cîhan û medeniyeta rojhelatê, aîdê cîhan û medeniyeta rojava ne jî.

> have a strong relation with the languages and literatures of the world. They were poets, writers, and politicians at the same time. And because of the situation of the Kurds, they did not manage to create a strong writing tradition. (*Kürt Edebiyatı Antolojisi* 268)[85]

Uzun probably talked about and promoted his work more than anyone else did. In one interview, he lists the main traits of his art as "the aestheticisation of sorrow" [*acıyı estetize etmek*] and "the authorship of contemplation" [*muhasebe yazarlığı*] (*Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 52).[86] "In this sorrow," he continues, "there is consciousness of and compassion for the other, the virtue of living together, tolerance, humanistic dialogue and approach" (52). He uses the metaphor of a chain to portray his oeuvre, adding that "when the chain is complete it will become clear that Mehmed Uzun tried to do one thing: write the narrative of sorrow [*acının anlatısını yazmak*]" (*Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 52). These claims are, indeed, in line with the humanistic and all-embracing approach seen in his works. Through an emphasis on the merits of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies of the past, and the struggles of these societies throughout the last century, Uzun opens the literary institution to heterogeneity. Kurds, Armenians, Yazidis, Jews, Arabs, and many other ethnic and religious groups live and suffer together in his novels.

Uzun, though one of the most popular Kurdish novelists, is nevertheless a very controversial figure in the Kurdish literary institution, especially as it concerns his novel *Ronî Mîna Evînê*. He has been harshly criticised in some Kurdish circles for engaging only with the struggles of the Kurdish intellectual classes and neglecting the reality of

[85] Tümü de eşsiz insanlar. Kürt dili ve edebiyatı için canlarını vermiş fedakar yazarlardı. Ancak neredeyse tümü de son derece yerel ve dünyadan uzaktı. Dünya dilleri ve edebiyatıyla ciddi, güçlü bir ilişkileri yoktu. Tümü de hem yazar, şair hem de siyasetçiydi. Ve Kürtlerin içinde bulunduğu koşullardan dolayı hiçbir zaman güçlü bir yazar geleneği yaratamamışlardı.

[86] Uzun uses the term "*muhasebe yazarlığı*" in a sense that is close to the idea of questioning oneself or thinking about something profoundly and in detail. Thus, the term could be translated as "the authorship of contemplation" into English.

common people, particularly villagers and workers.[87] Another critique levelled against Uzun is related to his tendency to move towards the Turkish literary institution. According to Scalbert-Yücel, one notices in recent Kurdish literature "[a] move towards themes more accessible and more conformable to the tastes of a Turkish readership," especially among prominent writers who have been translated into Turkish. To Scalbert-Yücel, Uzun's *Ronî Mîna Evînê* and Cewerî's *Ez ê Yeki Bikujim* (I Will Kill Someone, 2008) fit this trend because they contain certain themes that are widespread in Turkish public sphere, popular media, and literature. "The use of these common narratives can be a literary strategy for the Kurmanji authors to enter the Turkish field," Scalbert-Yücel writes, but it "also can be the effect of the homogenisation of narratives in the public sphere. In any case it shows the circulation of themes among the two literary spheres" ("Emergence and Equivocal Autonomization" 365).[88]

There are some important consequences of Uzun's and other Kurdish writers' move towards the Turkish literary institution. First, there has been an increase in translating and publishing Kurdish literary productions by major Turkish publishing houses (like Ayrıntı, Can, Doğan, Ithaki, Evrensel, Belge, and so forth), which has

[87] Uzun states that in his novels, there is nothing about the circumstances of villagers in the past or today; there is nothing about the Kurdish workers or a community in a Kurdish city, either. He points out that his heroes are cosmopolitan people, *i.e.*, people who live between many languages, cultures, and societies, as well as people who are raised by and engaged in cultural, literary, and artistic works (*Ziman û Roman* 128-9). Needless to say, this statement, along with the critique levelled by the *Vesta* circle, challenges Uzun's claim of "writing the narrative of sorrow," since without a constrained frame of representation in which the intellectuals stand for the societies, "writing the narrative of sorrow" hardly finds its true resonance in his novels. At least it should be noted that what Uzun means by "writing the narrative of sorrow" does not correspond to writing the sorrows of the subaltern or the defeated. Even though he claims always to have written about victims and disadvantaged people and their sorrowful lives and disappointments, these people are never common people.

[88] Uzun's desire for a wider readership and recognition in the Turkish literary institution is understandable, especially given that the circulation rates of his novels in their original Kurdish language are dramatically low compared to their Turkish translations. To illustrate, *Ronî Mîna Evînê* has reached its fourth edition in its original Kurdish while its Turkish translation, as far as I am able to observe, has been reprinted 26 times in standard version by *Ithaki*. With two pocket-size editions and two standard editions by the previous publisher *Avesta*, the total figure is 30.

brought about a broadening recognition of Kurdish literature in Turkey. Second, perhaps as a corollary of this increase, there is a potential risk that the Kurdish literary market will shrink as the discrete readership that sustains the market will probably opt for Turkish translations as they are easier to read.[89] Third, the autonomy, even existence, of the Kurdish literary institution, which is already skating on thin ice with barely sustainable financial resources, limited circulation means, and small readership, is further threatened.

Despite all of this criticism, Uzun is nevertheless celebrated as a pillar of modern Kurdish literature. Within some literary circles (consisting mostly of his fellow writers), he is credited with not only invigorating the institution of Kurdish literature and language but also, to some extent, with creating it.[90] In interviews, Uzun often alludes to the peculiarly difficult circumstances in which he began writing and mentions the struggles of Kurdish writers in creating a modern language and body of literature. "What the other writers in the world do" he says, "is to carry on a literary tradition. What Kurdish writers have to do, on the other hand, is to create a modern literary tradition" (Uzun, *Kürt Edebiyatı Antolojisi* 261).

In a speech delivered at a conference organised for him at Istanbul Bilgi University in 2007, Uzun described his writing career as a forced one: "I was a forced writer who wrote under obligation" [*mecbur bir yazardım ben, mecburiyetten yazan bir yazar*] (Diken 309).[91] On another occasion, he stated that he could have written in another language more conveniently, but he chose to write in Kurdish because he felt morally and

[89] Reasons for this anomaly are discussed in the chapter on the politics of language.

[90] For Muhsin Kızılkaya, "[i]n Kurdish literature Mehmed Uzun alone stands as a literary canon" (cited in Diken 44). Şeyhmus Diken's remarks on Uzun's arrival in Diyarbakır on his deathbed, when they were told that his days were numbered, is even more striking: "We were petrified because modern Kurdish literature had neither a twentieth nor a second man. Mehmed Uzun was the only man of letters to present the Kurdish language and our modern literature to the world" (Diken 190).

[91] This description was inspired by Yaşar Kemal's famous character Memed, in *İnce Memed*, whose individual rebellion is described as "the forced rebellion of the forced man."

conscientiously compelled to do so in order to save an endangered language. Here too, he describes his writing as "imperative writing" [*mecbur yazı*] (*Bir Dil Yaratmak* 141). Despite this commitment to Kurdish language and literature, Uzun considers it to be the death of writer (or an intellectual or artist) to become the mouthpiece of an ideology, although he acknowledges the extreme situation of Kurdish writers for whom there is no way out of politics. He sees this as the reality of the Kurds: "Kurdish writers, both those who are politically active and those who are not, are committed to politics," because "to write in Kurdish, to live with Kurdish identity, even to express being a Kurdish intellectual, is a political act in itself" (*Bir Dil Yaratmak* 13).

Ronî Mîna Evînê, Tarî Mîna Mirinê, Mehmed Uzun's most controversial and popular novel, is the story of Kevok, a rebel from an imaginary region the Mountain Country, where a rebellion is being waged against the imaginary Big Country, and Baz, a military commander from the Big Country. Kevok studies French literature in the Big Country with her boyfriend Jîr, who is also from the Mountain Country. After Jîr joins the rebels to fight for the liberty and rights of the Mountain Country, Kevok, too, decides to go after Jîr and join the rebels. During a clash, she is captured by the military squad of the Big Country, which is commanded by Baz. Kevok first resists revealing any information during the interrogations, but following days of severe torture, she surrenders and reveals the location of one of the rebel caves in the hope that her fellow guerrillas have changed their position by that time. Her comrades, however—including Renas, who once saved Kevok's life—have not changed their position. They are all killed during the ambush. Feeling guilty, desperate, and embittered, Kevok shuts down completely. She is kept in isolation in a house in the military area, where Baz occasionally visits her.

Raised in an orphanage, Baz receives a military education and becomes a successful commander in the Mountain Country. Having led an unhappy life, complete

with a failed marriage full of hatred, he seeks peace in the arms of a prostitute he called *Mader* (mother). During his visits to the house where Kevok is kept, he gradually becomes interested in Kevok's songs in the language of the Mountain Country. Kevok's knowledge of literature and her beauty start to affect Baz, and he falls in love with her. After this point, he becomes less aggressive towards people of the Mountain Country and their cause against the Big Country. During this time Baz learns that he is originally from the Mountain Country; his family, in fact, was killed by the same army he has been serving. In the end, he receives an order to hand Kevok over for execution, but he opposes this and flees with Kevok. They are caught, however, while they are waiting for a fake passport for Kevok, and are both executed.

According to Alan, the image of Turks as despot, prohibiter, and coloniser in modern Kurdish literature starts with the *Hawar* School: "In the works of the pioneers of this school, Celadet Bedir Khan, Kamiran Bedir Khan, Nûreddin Zaza, Osman Sebrî, and Cegerxwîn, the Turkish identity is denied. This is due in part to the anger caused by the ruthless suppressions of Shaikh Said, the Mount Ararat rebels, and the massacre of the Zîlan tribe" ("Di Edebiyata Kurdî Ya Modern" 344). Following the stories written by the members of *Hawar* School, this negative image of Turks is repeated in the Kurdish novel written both in diaspora and in Turkey. Nearly every novel of this period, beginning roughly in the late 1980s, explicitly or implicitly depicts the nation-state, its policies towards Kurds, and its representatives in a very negative way.

As for the confrontation, or what Alan calls "colonial confrontation," between the Kurds and the Turks, the Kurdish novel reflects a different character from that of the Turkish one. For instance, by contrast with the vast number of novels in Turkish literature that contain themes of intermarriage or love between the Kurds and Turks, there are only

a few novels with a similar content in the Kurdish novel. [92] "The colonial confrontation, in the Kurdish novel, is not crowned with a marriage, and thus the gender positions are not reversed (Kurdish man and Turkish woman). What we hear in reality is the clamour of fight and the mutter of the other [of Kurds]" (Alan, "Di Edebiyata Kurdî Ya Modern" 352).

When interpreted and rewritten in the first horizon, Uzun's novel finds its narrowly political and historical meaning in a context that is not entirely different from that of Karakurt's novel. Like *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, *Ronî Mîna Evînê*, too, sets its love story in the collective level of the confrontation between authority and insurgency. This time, though, the novel is located in a fictional setting rather than being placed in a real politico-historical context. Presented as a political allegory in which the real space and time, as well as characters and happenings, are concealed, Uzun's novel adopts a narrative strategy commonly deployed in oppressive regimes. It is not difficult to see that the fictional country of the novel is a stand-in for Turkey after the military coup in 1980. There is the Big Country, which is ruled by a military dictatorship and which faces an insurgency by the people of the Mountain Country which, in Ahmadzadeh's words, as "a clear allusion to Kurdistan, is referred as the 'black lands', the 'forgotten land', the 'forlorn and poor country', the 'country of father and grandfathers' and the 'occupied country' ("Traces of Statelessness" 74). Its different ethnic and cultural identities and their expressions, including the language, are denied and banned. Other, more subtle analogues include the guerrilla insurgency of the Mountain Country, forced migration and settlement policy adopted by the Big Country against the people of the Mountain Country, the burning of the Mountain Country villages by the Big Country forces, and so

[92] Apart from Uzun's novel, one can name Cîhan Roj's *Gîtara Bê Têl* (A Guitar without Strings, 2009), in which a Kurdish doctor, Şadi, and a Turkish nurse, Selin, fall in love with one another. This love, however, does not last long: imagining that it will be very difficult for her father to accept a Kurdish son-in-law and for her to settle in Mardin once they are married, Selin breaks up with Şadi.

forth. Indeed, it is such an obvious portrayal of modern Turkey that one wonders why Uzun bothered to create a fictional world in the first place.

A possible answer to this question may be the writer's concerns regarding the press laws, which easily connects anything having to do with Kurds, particularly in a political way, with separatism under *Article 8* of the Anti-Terror Law. Thus, to avoid state-controlled censorship and possible reprisal, instead of clearly broaching the political subject matter, Uzun chose to write allegorically.[93] A second possible reason is that Uzun intended to soften the political implications and character of the text. Uzun, as Scalbert-Yücel and others have reminded us, wanted to enter the Turkish literary institution and gain popularity among Turkish readers, as well as Kurdish people who could not read his novels in Kurmanji. Finally, artistic concerns may have motivated Uzun's use of allegory. Judging from some of his interview responses regarding the political aspects of Kurdish literature (Kaya 35; Uzun, *Ziman û Roman* 104; Uzun, *Bir Dil Yaratmak* 13), Uzun was meticulous about the precarious balance between aesthetics and politics in a work of art.

Let us return, though, to the real historical-political context of the novel. Starting in the 1960's, Kurds in Turkey joined new leftist movements, and their experience would later help them to launch a non-traditional and non-religious resistance movement as well as to create an intellectual and revolutionary nationalist body. From these events, the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (the Kurdistan Workers' Party, hereafter the PKK), came to the forefront of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Founded in Ankara by Abdullah Öcalan with a number of militant Kurdish nationalists in 1974, the group was primarily

[93] Nevertheless, in 2001 Uzun was accused by the Istanbul State Security Court of "having supported terrorism and incited rebels leading to separatism" after his novel *Ronî Mîna Evînê* and its Turkish translation was published in Turkey. Uzun himself, while standing trial (against all advice he travelled from Sweden to attend the court), submitted a speech in defence of human rights and the cultural expression of Kurdishness. He maintained that his novel was a fairy tale-like love story and had nothing to do with terrorism or separatism.

occupied with the organisation and refinement of the party's politics until 1978, when the organisation was officially formed in Diyarbakır (White, *Primitive Rebels* 135-36). Following the military coup in 1980, the group retreated to Lebanon for guerrilla training. Four years later, in 1984, the PKK launched its first paramilitary attacks on governmental, military, and other institutions of the Turkish state.[94]

In this politico-historical context, Uzun presents a love story as a symbolic solution to what appears to be the greatest political challenge in modern Turkey. Uzun's romance narrative between representatives of the state and of the resistance is a symbolic reconciliation between the two sides using reciprocal compromises and forbearances from both sides. In this regard, Uzun's and Karakurt's novels are linked thematically. Some differences, however, even at this manifest level, become apparent: first, Uzun's novel, unlike Karakurt's mirroring of state ideology, positions itself on the opposite side and voices the resistance's story as being at odds with that of the state. That is to say, while Karakurt's attitude toward the Kurdish resistance is excessively hostile, pejorative, humiliating, and propagandist, Uzun's is humanistic, neutral, tolerant, and understanding. Second, Uzun's story suggests a symbolic solution, albeit one that does not appear as a "solution" within the fictional boundaries: the lovers are caught and killed because they were fighting the system, not each other. Note that, as Alpay points out, Uzun states that Baz and Kevok were defeated *by* war, not "in the war" (Diken 232). Thus, although in Uzun the totalitarian, fascist, chauvinist, oppressive system defeats the individual, the individual manages to raise an opposition to the system. Karakurt's story, on the other

[94] The PKK's most important characteristics are: (i) a Marxist ideology and the humble origins of nearly all of its founders, being primarily a workers-villagers movement; (ii) an objective of forging a new Kurdish identity in Turkish Kurdistan to free Kurds not only from colonisers but from their colonised selves; (iii) the high number of female fighters who joined the PKK, not only to fight against the state but to resist the traditional feudal and patriarchal system; (iv) the relentless elimination of any opposition within the party, especially in the beginning; (v) its absolute break from any tribal and religious bonds; and (vi) its expansion outside of Turkey, attracting support from Kurdish diasporas in Europe and elsewhere—despite being a regional movement in the beginning.

hand, is simply an example of the banality of state propaganda: individuals worship the nation-state and its supposedly revolutionary, liberating, and protective Kemalist regime. Nevertheless, in both novels, the collective devours the individual.

Uzun's story asks whether social and political conflicts arise not from individuals, and thus peoples, but from the oppressive system. An important point emerges here about Uzun's method: Why does he adopt a theme—a love story between a Kurdish female and a Turkish soldier—that is burdened by a long history of political manipulation, representative clichés, and ideological messages? Uzun acknowledged in an interview that "to assimilate new generations of Kurds into Turkey and Turkishness, an appropriate novel tradition with the official ideology has been created. Here, too, Kurds have been humiliated." Uzun even refers, in this same interview, to a novel [obviously, *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*] by Karakurt (*Küllerinden Doğan Dil* 40). So why did Uzun use the same theme as the Kemalist literature?

Uzun, I argue, fell discreditably short in comprehending the complex nature of the representations (ethnic, national, sexual and so forth) in the Kemalist novels, as well as the naive simplification of the problem they betrayed. Uzun attempts to resolve the question (the struggle and demand for ethnic/national/cultural rights and the coercive response of the nation-state), which is embedded as much in gendered difference as in ethnic and national difference, by simply giving voice to the subjugated people so that they can object to the militarist and totalitarian regime in the novel. He does not seem to understand, however, that by naming the subjugated female guerrilla as Kevok (dove) and hyper-masculine military officer as Baz (hawk), with their accompanying binary connotations of hunted-hunter, weak-strong, giver-taker, *etc.*, he only mimics his fellow writer, Karakurt. He is blind to this gender dimension of difference, as well as to the fact that ethnic or national difference is always already prefigured by gender. That is to say,

national imagination could be appealing only when a nation could imagine itself with (allegedly) masculine qualities. No nation imagines itself as a woman. The woman is always the other nation. Nationhood is formulated by, through, in, and as manhood. And even more importantly, as Joane Nagel reminds us: "the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes. Terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness" (251-52). [95]

Moving to the second horizon, which is the social plane of the text, the social frame of *Ronî Mîna Evînê* is set against a background shaped by colonialism, ethnic orientalism, and the assimilatory policies of hegemony. This time, however, the story is written with sympathy towards the oppressed, depicting how the people of the Mountain Country suffer from the policies of the Big Country, *viz.*, forced migration and settlement, the burning down of the villages, the banning of cultural and linguistic expressions, and various other human rights violations. Most of these are conveyed sympathetically:

> The people who have possessed these lands for thousands of years are leaving their villages, their lands. Tonight, they are migrating, leaving with their hearts torn, slowly and quietly, with grief. They are left with no choice but to leave their villages and to head to their valleys and mountains. They have endured and resisted to this day but they have no

[95] According to James Messerschmidt (1993) and Nagel (1998), there is an academic and intellectual tendency to circumnavigate nationalism as a feminist issue. Even when feminist scholars approach the issue, Messerschmidt points out, their gender lens often have a woman-exclusively focus (cited in Nagel 244). Due to space limits, I cannot discuss the intrinsic and constructive link between masculinity and nationalism (as well as, imperialism, orientalism, and colonialism) in detail. In brevity, however, I would like to register some important points, here. As George L. Mosse points in *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996), the springs and climax of almost all types of nationalist movements was modern masculinity: "The masculine stereotype was not bound to any one of the powerful political ideologies of the previous century. It supported not only conservative movements… but the workers' movement as well; even Bolshevik man was said to be 'firm as an oak.' Modern masculinity from the very first was co-opted by the new nationalist movements of the nineteenth century" (7). Further, nationalist politics later proved to be a very useful and conducive realm to accomplish, integrate, complete, and reproduce masculinity in a given political and societal system. A masculine enticement in politics became even firmer and more affirmative thanks to the nationalist movements. I am in debt to Marilyn Booth for pointing this gap in my outlook and for suggesting adding a note on the link between masculinity and nationalism.

> other choice. Their enemy, what they call "the Stranger," the army of the Big Country, who speaks and has enacted their edict [ferman] in another language, who tortures them in another language, has surrendered them. They can neither resist nor stay in the village anymore. They are desperate. They have only two paths: death's path and the path of familiar mountains. (29-30)[96]

In addition to the narrator's sympathetic posture towards Kevok and the people of the Mountain Country, the characters themselves, particularly Kevok and Jîr, Kevok's boyfriend, voice their objections to the oppression and violence their people are exposed to. Kevok, despite Baz's and other officers' repeated efforts to force her to accept that there is one country, one state, one leader, one flag, continues to utter words like "us" and "our rights," which infuriate Baz. Likewise, Jîr, before leaving Kevok and his education to join the guerrilla forces to fight against the army of The Big Country, says:

> No, Kevok, no! Tell me! Do they not kill us, did they not kill us in the past, are they not killing us today, and will they not kill us tomorrow? Are we not dying every day? Is not each day that we continue to live worse than dying? Is not our country trodden underfoot? Are not the language of our fathers and grandfathers, our culture, and our existence under severe threat? Won't they become extinct? Are we not talking in their language now? Why, tell me, why? Have not they uprooted us from our ways and manners? (109)[97]

Jîr speaks of oppression, fear, and resistance, while Kevok despairingly tries to convince him to stay and live and reproduce. Examples of this kind of ideologically loaded passages abound, but at present let us attend to the depiction of the protagonists, which, I believe, subverts the generally sympathetic attitude Uzun takes up in dealing with "the other."

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[96] Xwediyên vê axê yên hezar salan gundê xwe, axa xwe terk dikin. Ew, îşev, bi dilekî sotî koç dikin û diçin. Hêdîka, bêdeng. Bi keser. Êdî tu çara wan nemaye, divê ew ji gund derkevin û herin; ber bi zikê çiyayên xwe, newal û geliyên xwe. Ew divê xwe bispêrin wan deran, warên lawir û teyran. Wan heta îro sebir kirin, li ber xwe dan, lê ji îro pê ve êdî li ber wan tu rê nemaye. Dijminên wan, yanî ordiya Welatê Mezin ku ew jê re dibêjin "biyani" ku bi zimanekî din dipeyivin, bi zimanekî din fermana wan rakirine, bi zimanekî din li wan hatine xezebê, dor li wan teng kirine. Ew êdî ne dikarin li ber xwe bidin, ne jî li gund bimînin. Ew bêgav mane, bêçare ketine. Bi tenê du rê li ber wan mane; riya mirinê û riya çiya û geliyên nas.

[97] Na, Kevok, na! Bibêje! Evana me nakujin, pêr nekuştin, do nekuştin, îro nakujin, ew ê sibê nekujin? Em, her û her namirin? Her roja ku em dijîn, ji mirinê kirêttir nîn e? Welatê me di bin lingan de nîn e? Zimanê me yê bav û kalan, çanda me, hebûna me ne di bin tehdîdên xedar de ne? Ew winda nabin? Ma em, ez û tu, niha bi zimanê wan napeyivin? Çima, bibêje çima? Wan em ji reh û rêçên me bi dûr nexistine?

To begin, Uzun portrays Kevok as a weak, indecisive, fragile, and vulnerable woman. Her reason for joining the guerrilla forces is, first, to reunite with Jîr; in other words, political motivations are not her primary ones. Given that her character represents Kurdish female guerrillas, and that on some level she was forced (by Uzun) to fall in love with Baz, who has a repugnant character, the portrayal of Kevok poses some grave questions about Uzun's intention to write from the other's side. What we encounter here, in Alan's words, is an "internalised orientalism," in which a reversed cliché is repeated. In his work on colonial confrontation in modern Kurdish literature, Alan states that Uzun's novel "takes on board the whole logic of representation of the Kurdish woman in the Turkish novels—as victims of a backward society and its conventions and traditions, unsatisfied, ignorant of her womanhood, misled into rebellions, and in need of a civilised man to show her the right way" ("Di Edebiyata Kurdî Ya Modern" 356).

According to Alan, this feature of Uzun's (and also Firat Cewerî's)[98] novels cause discomfort among Kurdish readers. Indeed, this is why a large proportion of Kurdish readers detest Uzun's and Cewerî's novels to the point that a Kurdish writer, Fêrgîn Melîk Aykoç has devoted a novel, *Siya Dema Borî* (In the Shadow of Past Time, 2009) to critiquing these novels. Although it is an allegorical text, the allusions to both writers and their pertinent novels are clear. In this metafictional setup, Berjîn, the heroine, reads two Kurdish novels in which Kurdish female guerrillas have been associated with Turkish soldiers. Pointing out that this is a common theme in the Turkish literary sphere, she cannot understand how Kurdish writers do the same to the Kurdish female guerrillas and to their own people. She finds the real female protagonists (Kevok and Diana) who gave

[98] In Cewerî's novel *Ez ê Yekî Bikujim* (I Will Kill Someone, 2008) the representation of the female protagonist, Diana, who is also a female guerrilla, is very similar of that of Uzun's novel. Despite being exposed to harsh tortures, Diana refuses to collaborate with the Turkish army. The Turkish commander, who pities Diana, asks her to choose between the gun and the penis while holding the gun with one hand and unbelting his trousers with the other. Diana asks him to kill her (132). The commander releases her but she is caught by village guards. When she refuses to kill her fellow guerrillas, she is forced into prostitution.

inspiration to the writers, Niviskar Herînas (whose name means "the most well-known writer;" and represents Uzun) and Niviskar Ronas (whose name means "the writer with a famous-face;" and represents Cewerî). Rojîn befriends these ex-guerrillas and cajoles them into telling their true stories. These true stories, however, betray every cliché and discursive structure that form both Uzun's and Cewerî's novels and their Turkish forerunners—the symbolic and subsidiary positioning of women, the banality of binary oppositions, the burden of representation and so forth. By adding some further detail of brutality on the part of the Turkish army and officers while emphasising the boldness of Kurdish female guerrillas, Aykoç believes himself to vindicate the Kurdish female guerrillas' shameful position and restore their dignity that has been lost to Turkish soldiers. Still, while Aykoç intends to criticise Uzun and Cewerî, he, too, mimics them in enforcing hierarchical and gendered boundaries.

Below I discuss what I argue is the *ideologeme* of the text, which I term "apologism" and which, I suggest, can help us to understand Uzun's ignorance of the gendered structure of difference. To this end, however, we need briefly to discuss the male protagonist. Originally from the Mountain Country, Baz survives a cave bombardment in which he loses all his relatives.[99] He is taken by a military officer to be raised in an orphanage in the Big Country, eventually growing up to become a brutal soldier. He stabs and beats his wife on their wedding night because she wants to bring General Serdar's (the dictator general who rules the country) picture down from the wall of their new home. He has many short and lasting affairs with various women, the longest

[99] This anecdote in the story, too, appears to be an allusion to the Dersim massacre. Led by Seyyid Rıza, the chief of a Zaza tribe in the region, the Dersim rebellion took place between 1937 and 1938. The government at the time, under Republican People's Party (CHP) leader İsmet İnönü, responded to the rebellion with airstrikes and mass killings of thousands of Kurdish Alevis. According to Beşikçi, one "mass killing technique used against Dersimli civilians, reported in a Turkish army account […] was to throw dynamite in caves where villagers had fled. Beşikçi reports one such incident, in Demenan, where 216 Dersimlis were killed in this manner" (cited in White, *Primitive Rebels* 83).

one being with an old prostitute whom he calls *Mader* (mother). He has another relatively long-lasting affair with a woman from the Mountain Country, whose ankles and wrists he likes to tie to the bed in order to "have his way" with her. Throughout the novel, he shouts, swears, rapes, beats, kills, and slaughters. Most of his actions are directed against women. Yet, towards the end of the story, he falls in love with Kevok and is transformed into a compassionate, understanding, contemplative, and sympathetic figure, so much so that Kevok is very close to falling in love with him. This transformation, however, turns the novel into an apology for oppression and coercion.

Indeed, there is an apology machine in Uzun's novels that starts to operate whenever his male characters betray weakness or failure. There is always someone (usually a woman) or something to blame for these failures; the male character is never culpable. Baz is probably the most hyper-masculine novel character in Uzun's novels, which are rife with them. Still, Uzun unrelentingly forces the reader to sympathise with him.

From this vantage point, it becomes clear that the text, while attending to the social confrontation of different ethnic and national identities, completely ignores (or worse, distorts) the voice of the other sex, the Kurdish female fighter. Here, Uzun's novel gets closer to Karakurt's. A move that might disrupt the phallocentrism would be to transfer the voice of actual Kurdish female guerrillas into the literary context. Arzu Demir's interviews with eleven female PKK guerrillas, collected in *Savaşta Barışta Özgürlükte Aşkta Dağın Kadın Hali* (The Woman State of Mountain in War, Peace, Freedom, and Love, 2014) provide us with these guerrillas' insights and approaches to love at length.[100]

[100] Two points must be registered here with respect to this move: first, although the interviews collected in Demir's work were conducted in 2013, it could be said that the female guerrillas' approaches and responses to the questions to a large extent resonate and affirm the general approach within the PKK movement regarding women after the 1990s. During the aforementioned interviews, Demir directly enquired about female guerrillas' opinion of love and the woman issue; this is why I have used these interviews rather than other resources, such as female guerillas' memoirs and diaries. From those diaries and memoirs, however,

Being very critical of the feudal and patriarchal mindset they have to fight against, both within the PKK and in the state, every guerrilla interviewed by Demir articulates an understanding of love that does not contain anything individualist or romantic. They stand opposed to any portrayal of love as a lofty or sexual relationship between a man and a woman that is based on the possession of woman by man; rather, they associate love with "how much you manage to free yourself, your country, and your soul" (99). Most of the female guerrillas stress that men should be freed from their "manhood" and women from their "womanhood," since both concepts are constructed by man, patriarchy, and other oppressive actors and factors. Without such liberation, they assert, neither true freedom nor a healthy concept of love is possible.

One of the guerrillas, Roza Pınar, aged 45, had been a guerrilla for 23 years by the time of interview December 2013. She states that instead of a sexually loaded concept of love, her understanding of love is one of self-actualisation: "There is a reality of life, which is contaminated by men, and women are offended by this reality. [In such a reality,] women do not belong to themselves, they are not themselves" (50). She states that men are feudal, oppressive, sovereign, and backward, and this is why she refuses them. There are, she grants, men who appear to be democratic, sweet-tempered, and friendly in treating one particular woman, but such men give the false impression that there are good men and bad men. In reality, to Pınar, it does not matter if a given man does not himself attempt to dominate a given woman; what matters is that he will attempt to dominate *some* [other] woman (56). Another guerrilla, Mizgîn Agirî, discusses the woman question and freedom as follows: "When you get to the heart of it, the fact of Kurdishness and

Gurbetelli Ersöz and Sakine Cansız's remarks and analysis make it clear that the woman issue was an important topic within the PKK throughout the 1990s. Thus, the time gap between the publication of Uzun's novel and the interviews does not pose any challenge to my interpretive move.

womanhood are not that disconnected. Our struggle for national liberation came first, but our pursuit of freedom as women, too, found its expression in it" (93).

According to these women, the two types of freedom are interconnected; thus, without becoming free as a woman, one cannot free her nation. Kevok, in this light, provided a poor representation of Kurdish female guerrillas. Moreover, Uzun could not be completely unaware of this, since the woman issue gained substantial importance both within the Kurdish community and the PKK movement in the 1990s. By 1994, according to PKK leader Öcalan, the proportion of women guerrillas within the ranks of PKK fighters stood at 30% (Özcan 160, Çağlayan 101); since then, the number and proportion of women who joined the PKK movement have only increased, both as fighters and as political activists.

The effects of this wave of participation on gender relations within the movement brought about important changes. In van Bruinessen's words, "Both men and women in the PKK have become more aware of traditional gender inequalities and frequently speak of women's liberation and equal rights" ("From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana" 105). According to Handan Çağlayan, starting in 1986, the woman question became the most discussed, written about topic within the Kurdish movement (98). This was the outcome of a change in both the leadership's and the party's approaches to women. While during 1980s women were viewed as slaves to be freed, by the 1990s the party and Öcalan realised women's potential as a political power that could be easily mobilised (Çağlayan 101). Furthermore, it became obvious that without an active civil society, one of the most important parts of which has become the politically mobilised women community, carrying out political activities along with military ones, the movement would not succeed. As an outcome of this process, "[w]omen's liberation has begun to figure prominently in the party's public discourse. The PKK chairman, Abdullah Öcalan, has

repeatedly compared the oppression of women in Kurdish society to the national oppression of the Kurds and called for a double liberation" (van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana" 105).

From this perspective, the emancipation of women, men, and the land become intrinsically linked. In Öcalan's analyses, conducted with female guerrillas, "*eski kadın*" (the old woman), who was passive, slave, degraded, feudal, and weak was replaced with "*yeni kadın*" (the new woman). It was concluded in these analyses that women and men have to give up their former womanhood and manhood, and sexual love should be replaced with love for one's country (Çağlayan 115).

Çağlayan points out, however, that even in these analyses, one detects a patriarchical discourse, especially in the critique of old women. In fact, as such scholars as Mojab (2001), Çağlayan (2007), and Alp (2015) have observed, Kurdish female guerrillas had to continue their fight against patriarchy even after they joined the PKK. Thus, starting in the early 1990s, a Kurdish woman who was aware of her "subjugated" position both as a Kurd and as a woman in Turkey had to (and still has to) carry out a fight against the traditional, patriarchical, militarist, national, racist, and sexist structures in three main domains. The first domain is the state and the state-sponsored Turkish nationalism and chauvinism, which launched a vast propaganda campaign against women guerrillas. As Mojab puts it: "While official nationalism labelled the males as 'terrorists,' its patriarchal politics reduced the women to 'prostitutes.' From a male chauvinist perspective, women could hardly qualify as brigands or terrorists; their sedition, revolt against the '*indivisibility* of the Turkish nation' and its 'territorial integrity' had to be vilified in sexist terms" (5). Secondly, Kurdish women had to fight as Kurdish feminists since, as Necla Açık states, Kurdish feminists could find a place neither among Turkish feminism (because of their Kurdish identity) nor within Kurdish politics (because of their

"feminist" identity), and this brought many Kurdish feminists together to form their own movement (281).[101] Lastly, Kurdish women had to face opposition within the PKK and Kurdish nationalist movement itself, for which, according to Mojab, patriarchy has always been the lap-dog: "its record is no better than paying lip service to gender equality" (9).

Having exposed the patriarchal underpinnings of Uzun's writing at the social level by giving voice to Kurdish women from various backgrounds, we can proceed to the last horizon in our triple and concentric model, namely the historical horizon. The paradigm that determines the formal choices and generic mode of Uzun's novel can be captured in the term of conciliation, *i.e.,* mediation between two antagonistic forces. Remember here that the story tells how it was written, as well, and the narrator is one of the characters; this suggests a blend of fiction and reality. Indeed, the novel, at every step of structuring both form and content, is under a conciliatory operation. This explains why Uzun's narrative takes with one move whatever it gives with another: he tells the story of oppressed people but in a way that will not offend the oppressor. Baz is a Turkish army officer who kills the oppressed but only because he does not know his oppressed roots; Kevok implicitly falls in love with Baz, whose character is associated with sexual assault, violence, murder, and so on, but Baz changes as he falls in love with Kevok; Kevok reveals her fellow guerrillas' location to Baz and thus brings about their deaths, but she

[101] It was during the second half of the 1990s that Kurdish feminist movements became active. Expressing their disappointment in Turkish feminism and its failure to sympathize with Kurdish women and their movement, Kurdish feminists started their own organisations, foundations and journals. The most important of these journals are *Irkçılığa ve Cinsiyetçiliğe Karşı Kürt Kadın Dergisi Roza* (Roza: the Journal of Kurdish Woman Against Racism and Sexism; 17 issues between 1996 and 2000), which was inspired by and named after Rosa Luxemburg, *Jujin* (the title combines the Kurdish words for woman [jin] and hedgehog [jûjî] and life [jîn]; 10 issues between 1996 and 2000), and *Jin û Jîyan* (Woman and Life; 13 issues between 1998 and 2001). However, as Mojab writes, "Kurdish feminists, too, have surrendered the women's movement to the interests of Kurdish nationalism" (8). Kurdish nationalism, "[b]owing to tradition and culture, […] relegated gender equality to the future, [postponing it] until after the achievement of independence" (Mojab 9).

supposes that they should have changed their place by the time of attack. The examples could be increased considerably. This conciliatory mode is due partly to the socially symbolic message Uzun wants to deliver.

It is, then, in the concept of love developed in the text that Uzun differentiates his work from Karakurt's novel. To analyse this, I borrow from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theory of love developed in *Commonwealth*:

> As soon as we identify love with the production of the common, we need to recognize that, just like the common, love is deeply ambivalent and susceptible to corruption. In fact what passes for love today in ordinary discourse and popular culture is predominantly its corrupt forms. The primary locus of this corruption is the shift in love from the common to the same, that is, from the production of the common to a repetition of the same or a process of unification. What distinguishes the beneficial forms of love instead is the constant interplay between the common and singularities (Hardt and Negri 181-82).

When we turn to Uzun and Karakurt in light of Hardt and Negri's theory we see that Karakurt promotes a notion of love in which the man and woman become a single totality. In this notion of love, love is heavily loaded by ideology. As Hardt described it in an interview, this is "'love of the same', which functions as a kind of racism, a kind of nationalism, *etc.*" (Schwartz 813). Hardt points out that this notion of love is an example of the "love gone bad" we see in Hollywood romances and in romantic poetry, in which love is thought of as a merging into one (Schwartz 813). Zeynep in *Dağları Bekleyen Kız*, we recall, starts to talk just like Adnan and immediately transforms from a rebel into a fanatic stalwart of Turkishness as soon as she falls in love with him.

On the basis of Hardt and Negri's theory of love as a political concept, Karakurt's novel promotes and is grounded in the notion of "identitarian love," which Hardt and Negri describe as springing from "a narrow interpretation of the mandate to love thy neighbour, understanding it as a call to love those most proximate, those most like you," as with family, clan, nation and so forth (Hardt and Negri 182):

> Family, race, and nation, then, which are corrupt forms of the common, are unsurprisingly the bases of corrupt forms of love. From this perspective we might say that populisms, nationalisms, fascisms, and various religious fundamentalisms are based not so much on hatred as on love—but a horribly corrupted form of identitarian love (Hardt and Negri 182).

This passage provides insight into why, in Karakurt's novel, the line between hatred and love is so thin. It takes only a couple of passages and around a few hours in the text for Zeynep and Adnan, daggers still drawn, to fall in love with one another. It further explains the verisimilitude between the presentation of this love and love for the Turkish nation and state. Just like the love of Adnan and Zeynep, the love for the Turkish nation is based on absolute devotion and hatred towards those who are threatening them. By saving Zeynep, Adnan actually saves the country, and as soon as Zeynep becomes a devoted lover, she turns into a Turkish patriot.

The notion of love in Uzun's novel, on the other hand, appears to respond to this identitarian love by developing a love story that contains love of the furthest, love of alterity, which according to Hardt and Negri "can function as an antidote against the poison of identitarian love, which hinders and distorts love's productivity by forcing it constantly to repeat the same" (183). What we see in Uzun's novel is a political notion of love that is open to difference rather than insisting on sameness. This, according to Hardt, is closer to real love; this is what, in his thought, is "precisely a transformative power, something in which we come out different" (Schwartz 812-13). In this ideal, love is a proliferation of differences, not the destruction of them; it is not a merging into unity, but the constructing of constellations of difference, social and otherwise. Accordingly, Baz's transformation, in which he turns from a killer to a protector, from a psychopathological machine into a sensible and compassionate soul and so on, as well as that of Kevok, gains meaning.

How, though, do these respective notions of love affect the form of the texts? As noted above, Uzun's novel operates under the mode of conciliation, which is embedded in his notion of love as a transformative power and a union between different subjects. This mode and notion of love together transform the totality of the text into different particularities. The novel is structured in such a way that the main female and male protagonists' stories are narrated in five separate parts each. There are seven other parts of the novel that deal with Baz and Kevok together. Apart from being conciliatory in its whole, the novel creates these parts to reconcile conflicts among its constituent parts. This narrative structure parallels the reconciliation between conflicting characteristics that occur first in particular forms (Baz's conflicted inner self, consisting of political dominance and individual insurrection, psychopathological deficiency and ideological completeness) and then in broader themes (bringing Baz and Kevok and what they represent together). Within this structure, the libidinal unconscious of political and social economy is linked to the content and form of the text at both the individual and collective levels, in a way that transmits the socially symbolic message: reconciliation and unity (love) is the only rational answer to this social, political, and historical contradiction. The desire of individuals is exactly what is desired collectively.

This brings us to the ending, *i.e.*, the death of hero and heroine. It must be stressed that the love story Uzun tells is a tragic one with a tragic ending, in which hero and heroine do not only fall (from power, from consistency, from faith) but are also defeated. Their fight is not against some supreme spirits or gods but against their fate and the oppressive system, which conditions every single trait and path in their particular and collective lives. The deaths of Baz and Kevok in this tragic mode emphasise the fierce superiority of the system over the individual. The happy ending of Karakurt's novel, by contrast, was the outcome of the wishful dream among the writers and the ideologies he represented of

obliterating the Kurdish question. Uzun's tragic ending, on the other hand, is the outcome of the conciliatory regime: he reconciles fantasy with reality. With this general thrust of Uzun's text, the ultimate historical meaning opens its wings after all horizons of interpretation are exhausted. I suggest that the historical meaning of *Ronî Mîna Evînê, Tarî Mîna Mirinê* could be captured in two types of power relations: the first is that between individuals and the system (political and social), and the second is that between man and woman (sexual and patriarchal). These are the vastest and the oldest power relations; they not only structure the text but also give rise to the conditions for its being written.

III. Conclusion: Compromising Loves, Intransigent Realities

At one point in Filiz Aygündüz's *Kaç Zil Kaldı Örtmenim?* (Turkish Teacher, Kurdish Love, 2011), a Kurdish lady called Aunt Sare, the mother of a friend of the heroine, tells the following story:

> Ataturk comes to Silvan during the Turkish Independence War and stays there for two months. My grandfather was the leader of our clan back then. They help him [Atatürk] in many ways. One day Ataturk sees my aunt. He likes her a lot. Before he leaves Silvan, he asks for her hand from my grandfather, in accordance with the traditional procedure. The clan convenes. They talk at length. "Mustafa," they say [Ataturk's first name], "is a good guy. But his life takes place on the road. He is a state officer, after all. [Our] daughter is accustomed to an orderly life and prosperity. This marriage would tire her; she would find it difficult." My grandfather did not give my aunt away to marry.

This story is followed by some important remarks:

> It is unknown whether this was a true story or only an urban legend that reached Aunt Sare's ear, but we could not help but think of how [different] the lives of Kurds would be today that if that marriage had taken place. There were many love stories in the history of these two communities, yes. This was different, however. We could not help but become angry with the grandfather. (78)[102]

[102] Atatürk Kurtuluş Savaşı sırasında Silvan'a gelip iki ay kalıyor. Karargâhını, çadırını kuruyor. Dedem aşiret reisi… Her türlü yardımı yapıyorlar. Büyük halamı görüyor bir gün Atatürk. Çok beğeniyor. Silvan'dan ayrılmadan önce, usulünce gidip istiyor dedemden halamı. Aşiret toplanıyor. Kendi aralarında uzun uzun konuşuyorlar. 'İyi bir insan Mustafa… Ama hayatı yollarda geçiyor. Ne de olsa devlet memuru.

This anecdote captures, in a way, the whole moral behind the intercultural love stories analysed in this chapter. Starting from Halide Edip Adıvar's *Kalp Ağrısı* (Heartache, 1926) and its sequel *Zeyno'nun Oğlu* (Zeyno's Son, 1928) to the last novels with the same theme, Mehmet Korkmaz's *Teğmenin Aşkı* (Lieutenant's Love, 2014) and Osman Gazi Kandemir's *Gelincik: Bir PKK'lı ile Türk Subayının Aşkı* (The Poppy: The Love of a PKK Guerrilla and a Turkish Military Officer, 2014), many novels have shown an ideologically driven fantasy in which the Kurdish question, an unsatisfying reality and one of the biggest challenges of Turkish history, is overcome. The stages of development of this theme could provide a different outlook at the directions of the Turkish novel.

Remziye Arslan's diachronic categorisation of the Turkish novel, which is based on its identification of the Kurds as "others," is helpful here. To summarize Arslan, there are three different approaches to the Kurds in the Turkish novel: (i) the chauvinist/nationalist approach that identify the difference as "ignorance," "savagery," and "reactionism;" (ii) the humanist/nationalist approach that identify the difference as "poverty," "backwardness," and "desperation;" and (iii) the democratic/egalitarian approach that identifies the difference as "cultural diversity," "the unity of equal differences," and "rightness" (369). According to Arslan, in the humanist/nationalist approach, the Turkish soldier of the chauvinist/nationalist approach is replaced by the Turkish teacher who functions like a missionary—teaching the Turkish language and the cultural ways to the Kurdish students in order to assimilate them. In other words, in the humanist approach, the strategies of inclusion rather than of exclusion are added to nationalist approach (Arslan 376-8). While the representative examples she gives are

Şimdi kızımızın alıştığı bir düzen, bolluk var. Bu evlilik yorar onu, zorlanır…' diyorlar. Vermiyor dedem halamı… Sare Teyze'nin kulağına kadar gelmiş bir şehir efsanesi miydi, yoksa gerçek miydi bilinmez, ama öyle bir evlilik gerçekleşseydi, bugün Kürtlerin hayatı nasıl olurdu diye düşündük. Bir sürü aşk hikâyesi vardı bu iki halkın geçmişinde elbet. Ama bu başkaydı… Dedeye kızmadan edemedik.

sometimes controversial, Arslan's categorical schema is useful for understanding the development of intercultural love between a Kurdish woman and Turkish man in the novels. In the chauvinist/nationalist approach seen in the works of Halide Edip, Esat Mahmut Karakurt, Barbaros Baykara, and Mehmet Korkmaz, love is narrated in an assimilative, orientalist, aggressive, hostile, and even racist social context with an ideologically manipulated, propagandist rhetoric. In Ömer Türkeş' words, these novels were written "[i]n a [political and historical] conjuncture in which the word 'civilised' became a fetish, and what was expected from literature was to contribute to social engineering" ("Toplum ve Kimlik" 845-7). Their approach to the subject matter appears in a context determined, in Müslüm Yücel's words, by "military, sexuality, and nationalism" (Alan, "Di Edebiyata Kurdî Ya Modern" 352). The novels presented in this chapter perpetuate the same socio-political order, which can be formulated as follows:

> In order to claim modernity, legitimacy and Western approval, the Turkish state creates an "axis of barbarity" consisting of Eastern "tradition" (*töre*), "religious reactionism" (*irtica*) and "separatist terror" (*bölücü terör*), and projects this essentialism onto the barbaric, Islamic, Kurdish corners of the East (*Doğu*), and, by contrast, depicting the Kemalist elites as civilised and enlightened (Zeydanlıoğlu, "The White Turkish Man's Burden" 13-14).

In the humanistic/nationalist approach represented by Ebru Gökçen Emre (and in part by Osman Gazi Kandemir as well, as his novel flirts with the first category), the social context is still very nationalist but in a more respectful, humanistic way. Here, since the novels are still written within the discursive field of nationalism, the relationship between Kurds and Turks is more or less one of polar opposites, with an implied superiority of the latter. Compared to the chauvinist/nationalist approach in which Kurdish entity is denied *en masse*, here the Kurds are recognised as a people. Indeed, not all Kurds are depicted as evil—just those who rise up against the Turkish state. Emre's novel *Aynı Güneşin Çocukları* (The Children of the Same Sun, 2008) indicates a belated rupture in the development of this theme, since this time the relationship is between a

Turkish woman and a politically active Kurdish man. It is interesting that the other novel with the same gender and ethnic positioning is also written by a female writer, Filiz Aygündüz, whose novel *Kaç Zil Kaldı Örtmenim?* represents the humanist/egalitarian category. This advancement clearly echoes the development of the Kurdish question and democracy in Turkey.[103] As novels proceed from the first category of chauvinist/nationalist to the last category of humanist/egalitarian, the novels' relation to reality gets stronger. In this acceleration, the theme of love and marriage gradually gives way to love and break-ups, as caused by social-political conditions.[104]

The obsession with Kurdish women in the Turkish novel[105] is related to the politics of nationalism, in which language women are singled out as "the symbolic repository of group identity" through an association of them with the private domain (Kandiyoti 434). In addition to being a symbolic repository of group identity, women's roles with respect to political structures, as listed by Anthias and Yuval-Davis, are multiple and of an immense strategic importance. This association is created in and reinforced by the binary oppositions in which gendered roles are configured with respect to their alleged social, cultural, and political positioning. Needless to say, this configuration is in full service of some power relation that both determines and is

[103] Rohat Alakom, in his work entitled *Türk Edebiyatında Kürtler* (The Kurds in Turkish Literature, 1989), states that in the novels written between 1980 and 2000, the representation of Kurds changes and their basic demands are voiced. These novels object to the war and instead of simply putting the whole blame on the Kurdish side, call attention to the harm caused by the state. This, according to Alakom, "could be perceived as the reflection of the experiences that the Kurds had gone through in Turkey" (123).

[104] This advancement explains why one of the most realistic novels ever written about the Kurdish question in Turkey, Mehmet Eroğlu's *Rojin* (Rojin, 2013), indirectly gives the illusion of an overhanging love between the Turkish military officer and the Kurdish guerrilla, yet it resists the readers' predictions and expectations and turns out to be a self-defeating prophecy or an instance of reverse psychology. *Rojin* thus marks an ultimate victory of reality over fantasy. In keeping with the topic of this chapter, there is an important scene in which one of the female guerrillas in the novel, Dilan, commits suicide when she realizes she has fallen in love with a fellow guerrilla, which is absolutely against the rules of the PKK.

[105] Most of the novels with this theme appealed to the popular imagination for a short period, but only a few remained in circulation among the general public or managed to find a place in literary canons and historiographies. Even those written by more canonical writers, like Halide Edip Adıvar and Refik Halit Karay, remained less popular compared to the writers' other works.

overdetermined by the nation-state, orientalism, colonialism, and other similar political structures. In brief, women represent a scope in which categorical differences can be registered not only at the manifest level (conscious) but also at the latent level (unconscious).

George Mosse has argued that racism is a "scavenger ideology" that has proven itself capable of "annexing" nationalism (234). Adapted to our case, whether orientalist, colonialist, or nationalist, it is the power relation based on sexual difference that is a "scavenger ideology." This is why a text that is intended to respond to Karakurt's novel, as well as a whole body of literature with similar features, can actually be in tune with it. As I showed in the second part of this chapter, Uzun's novel, though it positions itself on the other side of the social and political context from Karakurt's novel, still gets caught in the undertow of sexual differences and ends up just beside Karkurt's novel. In addition to the power of the current itself, however, Uzun's blindness to the affinity between sexual and cultural difference is also to blame for this outcome. In telling a love story between a man and a woman who stand for ideologically, politically, and socially antagonistic collective identities, as Uzun does, one must take great care. However, he does not employ, in Spivak's words, "a critical vocabulary that is appropriate to describe the experiences and histories of particular individuals and social groups who have been historically dispossessed and exploited" (Morton 45). The result is a controversy in the Kurdish literary institution in Turkey on the reception of Uzun's novel. Because of its stylistic and technical advances, some literary circles praised Uzun, whereas others condemned him because he borrows "the fixed terms of radical political discourses that claim to represent" Kurdish reality (Morton 35).

Uzun's and Karakurt's texts have quite a different understanding of love which, in my opinion, is both the result of and in accordance with the imposition and conditioning

of the state. In Uzun's novel, the state imposes and conditions the novel in two ways: in its presence (the oppressive and contested state, Turkish state), and in its absence (the oppressed Kurdish state). Uzun's love story tries to balance these two spheres of influence; hence, love is presented as a reconciliation. In Karakurt's novel, on the other hand, every single current and move of narrative is determined by a single, sublime, and desired monopoly of power: the Turkish state. This monopoly creates a love which, perforce, evolves to the only state of affairs desired and forced by the state, *i.e.*, marriage. The state, in other words, conditions and imposes love to be ultimately institutionalised so that it is easy to absorb.

Borrowing again from Hardt and Negri's theory, what we see in Karakurt is an identitarian love which "brings the production of subjectivity to a halt and abrogates the common" (184). This form of love is based on sameness, unity, and repetition. Here, love can be characterised as a "constitution;" it has a natural, intrinsic relationship with the state and its institutionalised spheres of power. In Uzun's writing, on the other hand, the story promotes love as an encounter of particularities in a common. Love, now, is formed as a "composition" and is based on singularities, harmony, and difference. Uzun, however, despite his attempt to promote a different understanding of love than that of Karakurt and other Turkish writers, fails to adopt an appropriate and politically correct vocabulary in dealing with such a precariously double-edged issue. In the end, Kevok and Baz's love is as much corrupted—by sexual, patriarchal, and militarist politics—as Zeynep and Adnan's love.

I argue that the promotion of this form of love in Uzun's novel is conditioned both by the lack of the state as well as by its contested presence. What Uzun tries to suggest by Baz and Kevok's love, with the paradoxical composition of the presence and absence of the state, is best captured in Martin Buber's notion of "bi-national state," *i.e.*, to be

Israel and Palestine in one.[106] As the ending of the story and Uzun's failure indicate, however, both a bi-national love and bi-national state that can enable it are still political anomalies.

[106] For further review, see Hermann 382-84.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STRANGE BEDFELLOWS, SECULARISTS AND ISLAMISTS: POLITICS OF RELIGION

On May 2, 1999, Merve Kavakçı became the first veiled deputy in the secular, yet Muslim, Turkish parliament. Her courageous march into the Turkish parliament provoked outrage among Kemalist secularists, and Kavakçı was prevented from taking the oath of office by agitated members of Democratic Left Party. Their leader, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, declared: "This is not the place to challenge the state! Please put this woman in her place!" Ecevit's remarks, coming from a Democratic leftist (who also happens to be a poet), captures two important aspects of this crisis: first, he drew explicit attention to the gender of the alleged offender (this woman), and second, he demonstrated his firm conviction that the authority of the state was absolute. This event provides a perfect point of departure for this chapter, highlighting, as it does, the politics of religion and the ongoing tension between Islamists and secularists in Turkey—even on the floor of the Parliament.

Three years after the incident above, Orhan Pamuk published his most political novel *Kar* (Snow),[107] in which he focused on the same crisis of secularisation in Turkey. Of all novels that focus on the politicisation of religion in the Turkish context, *Snow* attends to the complexity of the issue best, adopting an impartial perspective that avoids the binary lens that has long dominated such analyses. *Snow* provides insightful and accurate attention to the main points of the religion and politics issue, namely, the women question, the problematic processes of Westernisation, secularisation, and nationalism, as

[107] Since *Kar*, unlike the other novels analysed in the thesis, has been translated into English and its English translation is already known to readers worldwide, we opted to use its English title *Snow* throughout this chapter. Further, all citations from *Kar* are taken from its English translation by Maureen Freely.

well as the authoritarian and patriarchal structures of the Turkish state and society. It is also important to note that throughout this chapter, I approach religion as a political, social, and domestic concept rather than philosophical, transcendental, and universal one. Thus, the rise of Islamism and the question of secularisation are the main focus of the chapter.

There are three main parts to this chapter. The first part introduces the Kurdish context and discusses Kurdish writers' limited approach to the question of politics of religion. Because there is a paucity of Kurmanji novels on the topic of religion and politics, and because, as a truly dialogic novel *Snow* attends to the Kurdish context thoroughly, unlike in other chapters, I did not select a specific Kurmanji novel for analysis. Instead, here, I explore the reasons behind this religio-political void in the Kurdish literary institution in Turkey.[108] Following this, in the second part, I introduce Pamuk's literature and analyse *Snow* in accordance with the concentric model. Here, I also provide succinct introductions to the history of Turkish modernisation and secularisation, the rise of Turkish-Islamist movements, and the women question in Turkey so as to contextualize the rich socio-political setting of *Snow*. In the last part, I briefly compare the Turkish and Kurdish contexts regarding the politics of religion and summarise my main arguments and conclusions.

[108] I could have chosen Metê's *Labîrenta Cinan* (1994) for the analysis of the Kurdish religio-political context, which I think would present a good opportunity to discuss the role and importance of *volk*-Islam, folk beliefs and superstitions, and religio-cultural and spiritual values and practices in the Kurdish society. *Labîrenta Cinan*, in fact, would have been a very fitting choice for the comparison, since there are plenty of Turkish novels with similar themes and approaches to the question of religion. I first thought of comparing Metê's novel with Yaşar Kemal's *Yer Demir Gök Bakır* (Iron Earth, Copper Sky, 1963) or Reşat Nuri's *Yeşil Gece* (Green Night, 1928) for the similarity of their contents. I realised, however, that none of these texts attends to the politics of religion in its complexity as Pamuk's novel does. *Snow*'s thorough, inclusive, and multifaceted outlook, to my view, opens a wider and more comprehensive scope for the discussion of the religion issue in modern Turkey.

Before moving to the analyses of the Kurdish context and *Snow*, let me highlight one point: Throughout this chapter, I employ two discrete terms in order to cover two distinctive currents in the modern Turkish context. Accordingly, the term *Islamist literature* [*İslamcı edebiyat*] [109] designates the literary productions in which (i) the relationship with the other (religious, ethnic, sexual, and racial) is always framed by binary oppositions, antagonism and superiority complex; (ii) aesthetic values are subordinated to political statements, ideological ascriptions, and market concerns; (iii) the propaganda of Islamic values is expressed in a didactic manner and through Islamist messages; (iv) the story is told in formulaic compositions of melodramatic, agitating, and clear-cut narratives, in which characters undergo some change and find the Islamic truth; (v) answers and resolutions to the different issues modern Muslim communities face are prescribed and offered; and (vi) a reactionary, defensive, aggressive, and exclusivist Islamist ethos predominates.

The term Islamic literature [*İslami edebiyat*], on the other hand, designates those literary productions that for various reasons—*viz.*, the ideology and political standing of their writers, readers, publishing houses, and the circles and canons in which they are more circulated, and so forth—are considered and positioned as "religious" in the Turkish literary institution, however marginally different from their *Islamist* cousins. These literary productions are very accommodating rather than antagonistic, and their novelistic discourse is not under the sweeping influence of binary oppositions and inferiority or superiority complexes. As such, the aesthetic concerns and values are never sacrificed for political and ideological aspirations. Further, their share in the market is much more

[109] Various terms have been used inside and outside of Islamic circles to designate this current, salvation literature [*Hidayet edebiyatı*], resistance literature [*Direniş edebiyatı*], Qur'an literature [*Kuran edebiyatı*], or invitation literature [*Davet Edebiyatı*] (Çayır 14).

limited and their circulation is constrained to relatively higher socio-cultural Islamic circles and a limited group of secular readers.

Many scholars have pointed out that there exist two separate literary institutions in Turkey, Islamist and secular. In an interview published in *Milliyet*, Laurent Mignon defined this as an "interval conflict of cultures" (May 9, 2004). Mehmet Nuri Yardım, a Turkish-Islamist journalist, writer, and literary researcher, expresses this point while conducting an interview with a contemporary Turkish-Islamist writer, Emine Işınsu (b.1938), as follows:

> In the past writers like Peyami Safa, Arif Nihat Asya, Sâmiha Ayverdi, and Tarık Buğra [Turkish writers who are celebrated by Turkish and Islamist circles] had been shunned through an "assassination of silence". Today writers like you, Mustafa Necati Sepetçioğlu, Yavuz Bülent Bakiler, and Sevim Çokum [contemporary writers widely read in Turkish-Islamist circles] are exposed to the same silence. Will we ever manage to get rid of, as you felicitously put it, this "half literature?" When will this wall of denialism and shunning between the two Turkish literatures be pulled down? (Yardım 230)[110]

In this context, Pamuk's *Snow* appears as the text that pulls down the wall of denial and brings these two literary institutions together. It is obvious from many of his narrative choices that Pamuk is familiar with both Islamist and Islamic literatures; in fact, without a proper knowledge of these traditions some details in *Snow* might go unnoticed, *e.g.*, why Necip and Fazıl are so annoyingly eager to engage in a dialogue with Ka, whom they take to be an atheist modernist, and why all Islamists (from outspoken Kadife to ignoble Muhtar) always find themselves in a defensive position against secularists. Let us turn to the author and the text for further investigation into these questions and our discussion on the politics of religion in Turkey.

[110] Dün Peyami Safa, Arif Nihat Asya, Sâmiha Ayverdi ve Tarık Buğra gibi büyük yazar ve şairlerimiz, edebiyatı tekelinde tutan bazı çevreler tarafından "sükût suikasti"yle karşılaşmışlardı. Bugün de siz, Mustafa Necati Sepetçioğlu, Yavuz Bülent Bakiler ve Sevim Çokum gibi yazarlarımız ve şairlerimiz aynı muameleye tabi tutuluyor. Bu yok saymaların sonucu olarak sizin güzel yakıştırmanızla "yarım edebiyat"tan kurtulabilecek miyiz? İki ayrı Türk edebiyatı arasında inkar duvarları ne zaman yıkılacak?

I. A Void in the Kurdish Literary Institution: Politics of Religion in the Kurdish Context

A romantic revolutionary image of Kurds as freedom fighters is prevalent in foreign media, as well as in Kurdish scholarship; this has gained popularity especially since the Syrian crisis. Due perhaps to their historical struggle against four Muslim states as well as strong Marxist and secular influences in the past, Kurds are rarely associated with Islamic radicalism. Yet Kurds are as Islamic and religious as any ethno-national group in the Muslim world and also have been very active in the development of Islamist movements. Hezbollah in Turkey, for instance has always stressed its Kurdish character, using the Kurdish language for communication within the organisation, issuing newspaper and magazines in Kurdish (in Kurmanji and Zazaki), composing marches and epics for Kurdistan and its freedom,[111] making references and paying homage to Kurdish historical and intellectual figures like Khani, Sheikh Said, and Said-i Nursî and even using Kurdish during their infamous interrogation and torturing sessions (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 154).[112]

Still, as Michiel Leezenberg points out, in comparison with studies on language, culture, and even history, religion and Islam are the least prominent themes in Kurdish scholarship inside and outside of Turkey ("Political Islam Among the Kurds" 203). Pro-

[111] A series of cassettes entitled *Şehitler Kervanı* (A Caravan of Martyrs), for example, includes a march called "Kurdistan," in which the blood that was shed to free Islamic Kurdistan is sacralised (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 203). Some lines from this march read: "Blood is a call for us to martyrdom / Blood is a historic fervour to our hearts / For Islam we stood up in Kurdistan / […] Blood has drowned the traitor in Kurdistan, […]" (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 203).

[112] In a document entitled *Hezbollah in Its Own Words: Selections from the History of Struggle* (2004), which was written by the movement's new leader, after the founder-leader Velioğlu's death, and was the very first document the organisation has ever published since its establishment in the 1980s, the organisation declared thus: "Hezbollah is an Islamic movement that is centred in Kurdistan, dedicated to defend the Muslim Kurds' Islamic and human rights, and to find solutions for historical, social, political, economic and cultural problems through an Islamic approach. Hezbollah's duty is to struggle against oppression, tyranny and injustice and to bring freedom to Kurds" (Gürbüz 172).

secular Kurdish revolutionaries and nationalists have historically tended to emphasise pre-Islamic Kurdistan and mark Kurds' ancient religions, particularly Zoroastrianism, along with its alleged offshoots and heterodox forms of Islam like the *Yazidi* and the *Kakais* or *Ahl-e Haqq*, as the authentic Kurdish religions over and above Sunni Islam, to which Kurds were arguably forced to convert (Leezenberg, "Political Islam Among the Kurds" 203). This outlook gained popularity among Kurdish political activists starting in the 1960s, partly due to their close proximity to other Marxist and pro-secular political movements and partly due to the traditional Kurdish religious elite's flirtation with the Turkish centre-right parties.

Indeed, after the failed ethno-religious insurgencies in the first decades of the Republic, particularly Sheikh Said Rebellion, Kurdish Islamists retreated into clandestine survival in Kurdish *tariqas* and *madrasas*, *viz.*, unofficial Islamic organisations and education centres. These double-silenced ethno-religious groups lost their unchallenged leading position in Kurdish society towards the end of the 1970s as, with the rise of the PKK in the 1980s, a modern secular outlook started to gain prominence in framing the Kurdish political and intellectual mind. Around the turn of the millennium, however, Kurdish revolutionary nationalists came to understand that if they were to continue to stake their claim for Kurdish rights and freedoms, they could not downplay the role of Islam, for they were no longer the only party vying for status as Kurdish opposition. Rather, they would need to compete with other political parties claiming to stand for both the Kurds and Islamic values.[113]

[113] The PKK's Islamic populist move, however, caused some unease among the Alevi Kurds, the largest non-Sunni Muslim Kurdish group, who generally speak Zaza dialect of Kurdish and are located in northwestern Kurdistan, particularly in Dersim. The case of Alevi Kurds requires altogether a different outlook in frame of politics of religion as they have always been a double-other for Sunni Muslim Turkish nation state. While underscoring Islamic credentials helped the PKK and Kurdish revolutionary nationalists to debunk the defamatory allegations of the Turkish state (*i.e.*, of being communist atheists, of being pawns of Jewish and Christian lobbies, of being Armenian and non-Muslim in origin) and to challenge Islamist

The impact of ever-increasing popularity of Islamic parties, first the Welfare Party in the 1990s, its follow-up the Virtue Party, and finally the AKP in the 2000s, brought about the biggest challenge yet to the Kurdish political movement: the political and electoral clout of Islamist parties in the Kurdish region. What seemed to be a vestige of the Kurdish traditional-religious elite's cooperation with the centre-right parties, a flirtation between Kurdish masses and Islamist parties, turned into a lifetime, unilateral commitment to Islamist political actors who didn't hesitate to sell out the Kurdish people when power relations required it or when attracting Turkish ultra-nationalist votes appeared more rewarding. With the rise of this new political actor in the Kurdish region and politics, secularism's impact on the Kurdish question has become more vivid and clear: First, it divided the social and political actors, who could have otherwise collaborated towards producing a more effective solution, as it is certain that unaccommodating and undemocratic ethno-religious politics and legislation were partly a natural outcome of the lack of dialogue between secularists and Islamists (Somer 281). Second, it brought about a further fragmentation of the Kurdish political scene, creating new actors and new complexities.

What is more important in this picture, however, are the role, influence, and reaction of Islamists to the Kurdish question. Christopher Houston groups Islamists' responses to the Kurdish question into three competing discourses: *statist Islamist*, *Islamist*, and *Kurdish Islamist*—though they may occasionally share the same views and adopt similar attitudes (Houston 147). One such point of agreement is the denouncement of Republican modernisation, secularisation, Westernisation, and elimination of the

parties' popular rising in the Kurdish region, Turkish propaganda on Alevism's alleged Turkish roots and the alienation of Alevi Kurds due to increasing emphasis on Sunni Islam presented a counter challenge for the Kurdish movement (Leezenberg, "Political Islam Among the Kurds" 211).

consolidative power of Islam, which for all Islamists is the root cause of the Kurdish conflict.[114] Note, however, some Kurdish Islamists argue that it is the failure of modernisation and Westernisation, rather than their triumph, as Islamists claim, that brought about the conflict (Sakallıoglu 78-79). Further, a pro-Islamic approach, which is also called "Islamic peace," could be marked as a shared attitude for all three discourses. The argument is that despite its emphasis on overarching Islamic ideals, values, and identity, the supra-national global community of Muslim believers, the *ummah*, accommodates different cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities (Sarıgil and Fazlıoglu 441). Thus, whether Turkish or Kurdish, the advocates of the Islamic peace approach hold that ethno-nationalist politics and ambitions are outcomes of a weakened Islamic consciousness and *ummah* ideology (Sarıgil and Fazlıoglu 441).

This understanding of the issue, however, does not manifest itself in the same way throughout all three discourses. It gains a statist authoritarian and subtly Turkish supremacist character within Turkish-Islamist and conservative circles. Here, references to Islamic cement between Turks and Kurds and overemphasising *ummah* solidarity *vis-à-vis* Kurdish politics is very common, but also common is Turkish supremacy and the integrity and sacredness of the Turkish state. As Houston points out, Fethullah Gülen has been an important representative of statist Islamist discourse; he "conceives the Kurdish problem as residing in the Kurdishness of the Kurds" (154). Gülen has advocated the transformation of this identity through Islamic education, a realm his movement is

[114] Ümit Cizre Sakallıoglu's well-pointed argument on Islamic writers' strategic focus shifting is noteworthy here insofar as it demonstrates how in this discourse the "distribution and concentration of political power, the role of institutions and strategies of control which assume a heavy role for the evolution of Kurdish nationalism" is reduced to a decline in morality resulted from following a Western model of modernisation. For this reason, Sakallıoglu finds Islamists' analysis of the Kurdish conflict, as well as that of modernisation and nationalism, lacking historical and intellectual breadth and insight, not only for equating modernisation and Westernisation with the loss of morality and religious values but also for marking such degeneration as the root cause of nationalism (80).

universally known for, and the elimination of Kurdishness for the eradication of the Kurdish question (Houston 154). It goes without saying, no Kemalist has had ever held such a *bona fide* Kemalist vision of the Kurdish question as Gülen did. Sakallıoglu pinpoints the reason for such uniformity between Kemalist and Turkish-Islamist vision: "The Kemalist invasion of the Muslim psyche revolves around two concepts, 'state' and 'territorial unity'" (77). Here, Turkish-Islamists' main argument is that Kurdish nationalism and independence will harm and weaken the unity and integrity of both the Turkish state and the *ummah*. The impact of this Kemalist invasion is best observable in "the historical tradition of reverence to the state" and the entrenched amnesiac state of mind that Turkish-Islamists suffer, thus easily forgetting that Turkish nationalism, too, "is incompatible with the true Islamic creed that entails loyalty to the *ummah*" (Sakallıoglu 78).

The second discourse, that of Islamists, "bears its adjective-free status proudly—not Turkish nor statist Islamism, but plain, unadorned Islamism" (Houston 157). This discourse accepts the existence of Kurds as a *qavm* (people or nation) within the Muslim *ummah,* as well as Kurdish as a language. It is not Turkish-supremacist and submissive to the Turkish state authority; however, it requires that the ethno-national identity and ideals are received and valued as secondary and subsidiary qualities *vis-à-vis* Islamic ones (Houston 157). For them, the Kurdish question is a part of the same historical and political misdoing and suffering all Muslim people have been subjected to. What brings this discourse in close proximity with the statist Islamist one is a defensive attitude resulting from haunting pangs of remorse. Islamist qualms about shunning Kurdish suffering and remaining silent in the face of the Turkish state's violence against the Kurds has often made Islamists underscore their own suffering because of the same oppressive system. In this discourse, a grudging admittance is often accompanied with a heavy-handed and

excusatory, if not apologetic, defence. In this defence, the whole blame for the shared collective misery of Kurds and Muslims, as well as Islamists' disappointing passivism, is put on the Western forces, Kemalists, and modernisation. Ali Bulaç, for instance, once stated that the "Turks, Arabs and Persians did not occupy Kurdish geography…The French Revolution occupied us with foreign and enemy ideals" (cited in Houston 161).

Conflating Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms, Islamists claim that Kurds, like Turkish nationalists, have left the Islamic ideals for Kurdish ethno-nationalism. Some Kurdish Islamists have angrily denounced such criticism on the grounds that asking for basic human rights should not be counted as nationalism or racism. Mehmet Metiner, for instance, asked, "is it Kurdish racism to claim that the problem can only be solved within the boundaries of democracy? To want a recognition of Kurdish identity, to want the cultural rights of Kurds recognised, is this Kurdish racism?" (Houston 175). Kurdish Islamist Ramazan Değer summarizes this Islamist bias well: for Islamists "if you put the Kurdish problem on the agenda, you are a Kurdish nationalist" (Houston 175).

The third Islamist discourse on the issue, Kurdish Islamism, advocates a provisionally democratic and pluralistic solution over the lost Islamic ideals and the failing remedy of a utopian order (Houston 182). For Houston, this discourse is best observed in the wide range of books published by Kurdish Islamist publishing house *Nûbihar* (182).[115] A writer and scholar from this circle, Ayhan Geverî, for example,

[115] Apart from Turkish-Islamists' systemic silence and faith in state-authority, what had had been impactful in the rise of a distinct Kurdish Islamist discourse and Kurdish-Islamists' separating their ways with Turkish-Islamists was the bowdlerisation of Said-i Nursî's *RNK* (cleaning out the Kurdish material) by the publishing houses run by Turkish *Nur* movement, including the Gülen movement, *viz.*, Enver Neşriyat, Sözler Neşriyat, and Yeni Asya Neşriyat. In his study on this issue in the journal *Kürt Tarihi* (Kurdish History; April-May 2014), Ekrem Malbat provides many examples for such strategic alterations. Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursî, or Said-i Kurdî, (1877-1960), the writer of a pivotal book collection, *Risale-i Nur*, a Kurdish intellectual and theologian, advocated an Islamism that was not conservative but progressive and modern. Nursî voiced a proactive criticism to Kemalism's top-down reforms and understanding of modernism.

protests the romantic vision of shared Islamic history and the contextualisation of the Kurdish question by Islamists, stating that Kurds have no problem with Islam and *vice versa*. According to Geverî, in fact, there can be no such conflict, logically speaking, and Kurdish and Turkish Islamists should look for solutions rather than touting a romantic and utopian Islamic order (82). He further points out that the Kurdish question—the ban on Kurdish language and names, the burning of Kurdish villages, and the suffering and oppression Kurds have been exposed to—is not an Islamic issue but a human one (82).

The Kurdish Islamist domain, however, like the Kurdish world in general, lacks uniformity. Kurds find themselves in a four-cornered separation between (i) traditional *tariqas* and sheikhs who have limited yet continuing influence, (ii) Hezbollah and other extremist groups, (iii) Islamist Kurds who are pro-Kurdish rights, and (iv) a dissident, secular and modernist Kurdish community, including Alevi Kurds. This fragmentation is nowhere better observed than in Kurdish Islamists' approach to the PKK. According to Houston, Kurdish Islamists hold three positions: (i) *cooperation and support* (since the heritage of former Kurdish-Islamist dissidence, *e.g.*, Sheikh Said, Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights, and opposition to the oppressive Turkish state are prominent common grounds for both Kurdish Islamists and the PKK), (ii) *pragmatism of the lesser evil* (in their view, the PKK is created by the nation state and its policies its eradication would not necessarily mean the end of Kurdish question and there is a high possibility of the emergence of another Kurdish movement, maybe many dissident groups, in that case, it is better to have the PKK) and (iii) *absolute opposition* (due to the PKK's Marxist, secular, and allegedly atheistic outlook) (186). As Houston reminds us, however, even in this last position the dispute does not arise from the existence and rights of Kurds, but the main characteristics of Kurdishness (186).

Despite this complicated and heated context, however, the Kurmanji literary institution in Turkey and diaspora has shown a very limited interest in religion as a theme. When compared with the huge attention and involvement in the politics of language in fiction, their interest in religion and its politicisation is dwarfed. Many authors, such as Ereb Shemo[116] (Soviet Kurdish School), Jan Dost[117] (Syrian Kurmanji diaspora), and Şener Özmen[118] (current Turkish Kurmanji), have written about the use of religion by state powers and/or traditional Kurdish religious elite to manipulate masses (religion is the opium of the masses, for them as well), sometimes in a fashion similar to that of Republican Kemalist writers (religion as the main cause of underdevelopment and ignorance), but a systematic and thorough focus on the politics of religion is still missing in the Kurdish literary institution.

Hesenê Metê's outlook to the issue is substantially different from other Kurdish novelists. Marginalisation and degradation has never been a quality, or failure, of his literature. When focused on the religion issue, too, as he did, in *Gotinên Gunehkar* and *Labîrenta Cinan*, he did this through a metaphysical and mystical framing of the question. Although there are some minor references to religion as a narrowly political question, as

[116] Apart from his adaptation of Armenian play which reflects a proper socialist realist vision of religion, Shemo attended to the issue in *Dimdim* in a few points, but the outlook was the same degrading and simplistic one, as in the episode on performing dervishes, where he touched upon how the Ottomans Turks and Iranians use religion to manipulate and dominate Kurds.

[117] Jan Dost has visited the issue considerably more often, yet his outlook, too, is not that authentic, indeed, it is quite hackneyed, with two important thematic framings coming to the fore: the sectarian differences and the use of religion by manipulators and deceitful religious figures.

[118] Almost every aspect of the Kurdish identity and question (from political violence to long-lasting state of emergency, from language ban to tortures and disappearances) that have created the Kurdish (male) mind and psyche in Turkey find a resonance, if not particular attention, in Özmen's novels. Yet, except for a few episodic references to Islamists' moral double standards regarding the Palestinian question and the Kurdish question, as seen in *Pêşbaziya Çîrokên Neqediyayî* (The Contest of Inconclusive Stories, 2010), Özmen's political novels, too, say very little on the politics of religion.

implied references to Hezbollah atrocities in *Tofan*, Metê's focus on religion is philosophical, transcendental, and universal rather than political, actual, and local.

The main reason for the lack of proper literary attention to religion and its politics, I argue, is that unlike language, religion is not a differential aspect of Kurdish identity and the Kurdish movement, which has always been the main motivating force and source for modern literature. When compared to other aspects of Kurdish national identity (language, ethnicity, homeland, and history), in other words, religion is the least salient and agreed-upon identity domain in modern Kurdish writings. In fact, in many novels, the more Kurdish nationalists the characters are, the less religious they become.[119]

II. Riding Dos-à-dos, Secularists and Islamists in the Same Carriage of Authoritarianism and Social Engineering: Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*

Probably one of the few Turkish writers known and read widely outside of Turkey, Orhan Pamuk was born in 1952 in Istanbul, into a well-to-do elite family with a firm faith in Republican ideals and Western rationalism (Pamuk, *Öteki Renkler* 165-66). He received a good education in Robert College and pursued a career in architecture at Istanbul Technical University but dropped the course and opted for journalism—the main reason being that this programme did not require compulsory attendance. He finished his BA in journalism degree but never practiced the profession. Until the age of 22 Pamuk desired to become a reputable painter, but he gave up painting and launched a writing career. He finished his first novel, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (Cevdet Bey and His Sons, 1982), in four years at the age of 26, but he could not manage to get it published until

[119] This is especially the case in Dost's *Mîrname* (A Letter to Mîr, 2008). Here, Dost portrays the famous classical poet Khani as a humanist intellectual with mutual respect for all religions and faiths—as well as a Kurdish nationalist. Khani attracts Mîr's anger and hostility when he stresses ethnic and national bonds and identity rather than religious ones, and always advises attendees of his sermons during Friday prayers that Kurds must unify against their enemies. One of Khani's adversaries points out that during his Friday *khutbahs* (sermons), instead of addressing the *jamaat* as "*gelî misilmanen*" (O Muslim *jamaat!*) he says "*gelî kurmancan*" (O Kurdish *jamaat!*) (84).

1982 (Pamuk, *Öteki Renkler* 139). The novel, a story of three generations of an affluent Nişantaşı family, was mostly influenced by Pamuk's own family history (Pamuk, *Öteki Renkler* 141). Remembering these years during an interview, he said, "I was at the end of my tether when my first book was published. For eight years, I didn't make a penny. I worked so hard, didn't drink, and didn't enjoy life" (Yılmaz, "The Imagined Exile" 114). Nevertheless, this novel started an immense writing career full of national and international awards, including the 2006 Nobel Prize for Literature.

He published his second novel, *Sessiz Ev* (The Silent House, 1983), a politically charged post-coup story of three siblings who visit their grandmother the year following the coup. In 1985, Pamuk published *Beyaz Kale* (The White Castle), which marked the first step in his universal recognition as a literary genius. Here, turning to history for inspiration, Pamuk narrates the strange story of an Ottoman scholar and his Venetian slave in a literary fashion that later became one of his trademarks: doppelgängers and doubles that often represent opposing yet attracting forces (Western-Eastern, modern-secular, evil-good and so forth) and that end up merging into one another or taking each other's place. This move was typically implemented through narrative strategies that could be called *Pamukian deconstruction*, *i.e.*, the annihilation of binaries through parody, mockery, and metafictional plays.

In 1990 Pamuk published one of the most playful novels of the Turkish literature, *Kara Kitap* (The Black Book). Turning Istanbul (its streets, history, and socio-cultural texture) into a novel, *Kara Kitap* tells the story of a lawyer's search for his missing wife. What seems to be a proper detective novel topic, however, veers dramatically away from conventional plots, beguiling the reader with metaphysical and intangible mysteries and leaving them longing for closure. As Pamuk himself points out, the tiringly long, labyrinthine-like circling, and dizzying baroque sentences of the novel try to reflect the

giddy complexity, disorder, and energy of Istanbul (*Öteki Renkler* 151). With its exploratory and innovative style, successful postmodern literary techniques and twists, *Kara Kitap* has become one of the most enigmatic, esoteric and florid readings of the modern Turkish literature.

Opening with one of the catchiest first lines in the Turkish literature, "I read a book one day and my whole life was changed" (3), his next novel, *Yeni Hayat* (The New Life, 1994), tells the story of a young university student's search for a mysterious book. The young protagonist, Osman, is disoriented after reading a book and becomes uprooted from his own identity, reflecting another Pamukian thematic fixation: self-inflicted or love-inflicted identity theft. Osman sets out on a search for the world and the reality that is told in the book.

The next novel, *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (My Name is Red), an artistic *tour de force*, was published in 1998 and became a bestseller in Turkey. Part murder story, part love story, *Benim Adım Kırmızı* is told in a series of interwoven vignettes in which multiple perspectives—human and nonhuman, living and dead, subject and object—recount their own stories and provide further details towards the resolution of the mysterious murder. The setting, the artistic and political circles of Istanbul at the end of the 16th century, is carried through the rich Ottoman-Persian ornamental illustrations, particularly miniature and traditional love stories, and philosophical discussions over aesthetic and religious questions. Philosophy rarely coquets with crime novels, and this is the most important part of Pamuk's success in *Benim Adım Kırmızı*: combining literary trickery, thriller, and page-turning readability with esoteric philosophical debates.

Öteki Renkler: Seçme Yazılar ve Bir Hikâye (Other Colours: Essays and a Story, 1999) is a selection of writings on life, art, books, and cities and includes a story,

"Pencereden Bakmak" (To Look out the Window), an autobiographical short story—a miniature *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*. Hard to define, *Istanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir* (Istanbul: Memories and the City, 2004) is a poetic tribute to the city that has been the main inspirational source and building block for Pamuk's identity and art. As Christopher de Bellagiue pointed out in his review of the book for *The New York Times* (June 12, 2005), "*Istanbul"* (both the book and the city) is "full of byways that lead the reader into Pamuk's fiction—sometimes with a jolting literalness." These books were followed by yet another fictional triumph *Kar* (Snow), Pamuk's "first and last political novel" as he put it. It was published in 2002 and was selected as one of the best 10 books of 2004 by *The New York Times*.

His first work after receiving the Nobel Prize, *Masumiyet Müzesi* (The Museum of Innocence, 2008), tells the story of Kemal, a privileged 30-year-old Istanbulian rogue who falls in love with an 18-year-old girl named Füsun, in the background of upper-class Istanbul of the 1970s and 80s. What starts as a bachelor fling, however, turns into a lifetime obsession for Kemal. The love in *Masumiyet Müzesi* veers away from affection and romantic feelings; it is anything but conventional. The whole novel conveys an absorbing introspection, however dark, agonising, and androcentric, that explores the complex relation between love, desire, obsession, and fetish. Reminiscent of the Proustian longing to recapture the lost time, the protagonist Kemal tries to retrieve the happy times with his lost lover Füsun through pilfering and collecting items belonging to Füsun, including 4,213 cigarette butts. The fetishist values of these pilfered items, *à la* Derridian *supplement* that accretes and substitutes simultaneously, in time start to take Füsun's place. The museum that Kemal creates to bring every memento of Füsun together in the novel, and the real museum that Pamuk opened in 2012, Museum of Innocence, obliterate the boundaries between the fictional and the real—Pamuk's life-long literary enterprise.

Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık (A Strangeness in My Mind), Pamuk's ninth novel, was published in 2014. The jocular subtitle reads, in an allusion to classical novels, "being the adventure and dreams of Mevlut Karatas, a seller of *boza*, and of his friends, and also a portrait of life in Istanbul between 1969 and 2012 from many different points of view." The novel tells the modern history of the city and of one of its street vendors, but in a minor key. In this epic of everyday life of a "small man," the emotional, cultural, and political state of the nation is presented in the background. A wilful and optimist outsider who simmers with inarticulate thoughts, feelings, and a strangeness-in-mind, Mevlut is, as his heavy-handed communist friend Ferhat states, "a bit of a weirdo with a heart of gold" (183). In strange seas, away from his fictional comfort zone (the story of upper class white Turkish males), Pamuk manages to use his unmatchable Istanbul proficiency to understand and explain his character. Indeed, the history and mode of Mevlut and Istanbul are interfused, and the narrative moves fluidly around both the city and Mevlut's mind. Put differently, in this novel, Pamuk tries to capture an *Istanbul-state-of-mind*.

Scholars such as Yıldız Ecevit and Erdağ Göknar argue that Pamuk's texts present an episode of novel forms and techniques, ranging from conventional-realist to postmodern-metafictional, and Pamuk tries different and new formal experiments in each and every text (Göknar 24; Ecevit 23). Pamuk's dedication to renewing his writing technically and stylistically is important, but what is more substantial and surprising is the fact that despite always dealing with very complex questions—*e.g.*, identity construction and crisis and the relation between fiction and reality, East and West, and so forth—and doing so in convoluted, experimental ways, the popular appeal of his novels has always remained somewhat intact. That is to say, paradoxically enough, Pamuk's writing remains esoteric and popular at once.

This complex and convoluted style is nowhere better illustrated than in *The New Life*, a novel that marked the start of Pamuk's popularity inside and outside of Turkey. The narrative complexity is aggravated here by constant contextual references to socio-cultural, historical, and political incidents and problematics, and articulated in a meta-fictional setting through a narrative discourse which is drenched in mockery, parody, allusions and plays, and is at times impenetrable even to critical Turkish readers. To provide an incisive picture of this style, let us turn to a scene in the novel in which the hero and heroine, Canan and Osman, arrive at an exhibition in the *Kenan Evren* High School (a school named after Kenan Evren, the Turkish general who masterminded a savagely violent coup in 1980 and terrorised the country for years). Here, in the school cafeteria, they see the display of "the first Turkish-made gizmo that detects pork in any given product" (an allusion to Turkish and Muslim people's paranoia concerning possible use of pork fat in processed food and snacks), "scissors that automatically clip newspaper coupons" (a marketing strategy overused by Turkish newspapers that turned into a societal frenzy throughout the second half of the 20th century). Even one of the most resilient questions in modern Turkey seems to be resolved:

> [A] wind-up clock that eliminates the whole issue of minaret, muezzin, loudspeakers, and Westernisation-Islamisation through a modern and affordable solution. Instead of the usual cuckoo bird, two figures were attached to the classic mechanism. At prayer time a tiny imam appeared on the lower layer, which was shaped like a minaret balcony, to announce three times that "God is Great!" [*Allah Uludur!*] and a minute toy gentleman, with no moustache but a cravat, showed up in the upper balcony on every hour, stating that "Happiness is being a Turk, a Turk, a Turk!". (79)[120]

[120] [B]ir hamlede bütün bir minare, müezzin, hoparlör ve Batılılaşma-İslamlaşma sorununu modern ve ekonomik bir çözümle safdışı bırakan kurgulu saati gördük. Bildiğimiz guguklu saatin kuşu yerine geleneksel mekanizmaya iki figür bağlanmıştı. Namaz saatlerinde şerefe biçimindeki ilk katta belirip üç kez 'Allah uludur!' diyen minik bir imam ve saat başlarında yukarıdaki şerefede belirip, 'Ne mutlu Türküm, Türküm, Türküm!' diyen kravatlı ve bıyıksız bir minik oyuncak beyefendi.

This short passage is full of allusions, plays, and parodic elements. The clock that resolves the entire question of secularisation is an allusion to Tanpınar's, one of Pamuk's literary masters, ultimate parody of Kemalist Westernisation from above in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (The Time Regulation Institute, 1962) and Kemalist reform of the adaptation of the European calendar system in 1925. The exclamation "Allah Uludur!" (God is Great!), which is the first line of the *azan*, here, becomes part Arabic part Turkish, rather than Arabic "Allahu akbar" or Turkish "Tanrı uludur"; this is a reference to a long dispute in modern Turkish history concerning the language of the *azan*, and a playful mockery of the Turkish-Islamist synthesis which started to appear in the 1980s. Numerous other allusions and plays are registered, but what is even more daring and noteworthy is the fact that this extremely loaded and involved discourse is grounded in an excessively knotty and labyrinthine meta-fictional setting, a key attribute of his novels.

Pamuk shows a great propensity for meta-fiction and even sauciness with his readers. Postmodernist and meta-fictional plays often hinge on Pamuk's investigation of the elusive and intangible nature of meaning and identity, as well as fiction and reality. An emblematic element in his novels, or a part-fictional, part-ontological motif, as Ecevit called it (34), is an author or poet who questions and contemplates on writing, reading, representation, reality, and fiction. This type of character highlights the importance of these questions for Pamuk himself; indeed, his novels are full of references to theorists and intellectuals who have written about these issues, from Aristotle to Bakhtin—another constituent of his esoteric discourse. Thus, as Ecevit points out, it could be argued that Pamuk's model reader is someone who is knowledgeable about modern literary theories and literary techniques (50).

Growing up in an affluent and modernised district of Istanbul called *Nişantaşı*, Pamuk nevertheless managed to capture and reflect the *hüzün*-drenched [*hüzün*, a Turkish

word for describing a constant state of mind in which one feels melancholic and spiritually anguished with no specific reason and without feeling disturbed by it] soul of Istanbul and write about all of its facets (modern, developed, underdeveloped, Western, and Eastern alike) affectionately and masterfully. Despite his Republican and secular background, he developed an active interest in the Islamic culture, Ottoman past, and Sufism of his homeland. One of his major literary accomplishments is his ability to set into a fiction, a core identifying issue of modern Turkey, namely, the reconciliation of traditional and modern, secular and Islamic, Republican and Ottoman. Pamuk often stated that his writing is in fact the outcome of the conflict between two forces, *viz.*, Republican-Westernist-secular-rationalist, on the one hand, and Islamic-Eastern-religious-spiritualist, on the other (*Öteki Renkler* 165-66): [121]

> All my books are made from a mixture of Eastern and Western methods, styles, habits, and histories, and I owe my richness to these legacies. My comfort, my double happiness, comes from this same source: I can wander between these two worlds, without feeling guilty just as if I wander in my own home. Just as conservatives and religious fundamentalists cannot be at ease with the West, as I am, the idealist modernists, too, can never understand how I could make use of tradition so easily. (*Öteki Renkler* 168-69)[122]

Pamuk further argued that these two forces are in fact nourishing sources for literature, and a writer who searches for his/her own voice should embrace both identities and create a third one, "a third voice," rather than feeling compelled to choose one over another (*ÖR* 357). To this end, Pamuk always tried to transcend boundaries between long-established

[121] Some of the essays in the original Turkish edition of *Öteki Renkler* are not included in its English translation *Other Colours*. Thus, I used both Turkish and English editions. All translations from the original Turkish version, indicated as *Öteki Renkler*, are mine.

[122] Bütün kitaplarım Doğu'nun ve Batı'nın yöntem, usul, alışkanlık ve tarihinin karışmasından yapılmıştır ve kendi zenginliğimi de buna borçluyum. Kendi rahatlığım, çift mutluluğum da buradan gelir, iki dünya arasında suçluluk duyusu duymadan, kendi evimde gezinir gibi gezinirim. Muhafazakârlar, köktendinciler benim Batı'yla kurabildiğim rahatlığı asla hissedemedikleri gibi, hayalperest modernistler de benim gelenekten rahat rahat yararlanabilmemi hiçbir zaman anlayamazlar.

structures and dichotomies of the West and the East, secular and Islamist, modern and traditional, universal and local, central and peripheral, and so forth.

Accordingly, what differentiates Pamuk's writing from the writings of many Turkish authors who had attended to the same questions is that Pamuk never receives these dualities as compartmentalised and isolated. Rather than prescribing a synthesis to resolve the tension, he ventures to find a site of emancipation from such dualities and synthesis. Such attempts for resolution, to Pamuk, are Sisyphean labour; for him, the tension arising from these dualities is a defining characteristic of Turkish identity and is better used as a constructive lever for literary creation.

In addition to his shrewd understanding of the identity question and his impartial and objective approach, Pamuk's success in transcending boundaries has been due, in part, to his resourceful juxtaposition of identity questions with the formal, stylistic, and technical structure of narrative. That is to say, any quest and investigation of the question of identity, which is inextricably intertwined with epistemological and ontological binaries on the level of content, is parallel with another search at the level of the formal and generic configuration. The latter, *viz.,* the formational quest, is often registered through the same framing question of boundaries between fiction and reality. As a result of this quest, the use of meta-fiction and meta-fictional literary devices (most commonly parody, pastiche, text-within-text, and the absent text) have always been a quintessence of Pamuk's novels. In sum, Pamuk not only thinks about identity and fiction through similar processes and terms but also constructs them as the same question—elusive, intangible, and hinging on the relationship between difference and similarity. This is nowhere better exemplified than in *Snow,* to which we should now turn.

Snow is set in the 1990s in Kars, a border city in north-eastern Turkey. The novel starts with the main character's arrival at the city. After twelve years in Frankfurt, Kerim

Alakuşoğlu, or Ka, as he prefers to be called, comes back first to Istanbul to attend his mother's funeral. From there he moves to Kars in order to report on an epidemic of copycat suicide among young women for the secularist national journal *Cumhuriyet* (Republic). After long years of an intense and grievous solitude in Germany, in Kars Ka also hopes to meet İpek (Silk), an intoxicatingly beautiful classmate from college years. İpek, now divorced from her husband, Muhtar, lives with her old-romantic revolutionary father, Turgut Bey, and young but cool and collected sister Kadife (Velvet) who is considered by many as the head of headscarf girls in Kars. The three run and live in a hotel where Ka also opts to stay during his visit.

A dried-up poet, suffering from hopelessness and an uncomfortable numbness, and finding the only remedy in pornography and fantasy, Ka falls for İpek's excessive beauty at first (re-)sight. From this moment on, Ka's main motivation for living becomes uniting with İpek and persuading her to come to Frankfurt with him. His work takes over his daily living, and he begins investigating the suicide epidemic, interviewing locals and families of suicides and collecting information and insights on the issue. Very much interested in Ka's motivation for visiting them in this "God's forgotten land," many locals are eager to meet Ka and share their thoughts. During these meetings, Ka is constantly taken as a Westernist and an atheist (to many the two are synonymous) and asked about his insights on certain political and religious issues. These discussions, along with İpek's beauty and a promise of release from the misery, loneliness and despair of his exilic life, become a new source of poetic inspiration for Ka. Throughout his short visits in Kars, many poems come to him as though divinely inspired, and in a trance-like state he jots them down in a green notebook.

In order to have some private time with İpek, Ka meets with her in the New Life Pastry Shop (an allusion to Pamuk's novel *New Life*). Here, as the two converse, a young

Islamist extremist kills the director of the Education Institute, who is blamed for preventing veiled girls into the classroom in accordance with state policy. Ka and İpek leave the place immediately and Ka goes to meet Muhtar, İpek's ex-husband and an old acquaintance of Ka. An ex-Marxist revolutionary, failed poet and a new Islamist politician, Muhtar, runs for mayor in a local election and desires to remarry İpek. When Muhtar learns about the assassination of the director, he fears that Ka's coming to him directly after the incident might cause suspicion. Thus he demands Ka to call the police. The police arrive promptly and collect both Ka and Muhtar. While Ka is treated well and released immediately after giving his testimony, Muhtar is beaten harshly for the sole reason of having been an Islamist candidate.[123]

There are three lurid and extended climaxes in the novel in which the historical, politico-cultural and social diversity of this politically charged city is brought into sharp relief. The first takes place when a wandering theatre company from Ankara stages a play, *My Fatherland or My Headscarf*. The company is run by failed actor Sunay Zaim, who had once been chosen to play Atatürk but missed out on this once-in-a-lifetime chance due to his inconstant and conflicting statements and desperate addiction to fame. Advertised as "the Enlightenment masterwork from the early years of the republic" and performed in a ridiculously burlesque manner, *My Fatherland or My Headscarf* draws immense public attention thanks to the live television broadcast and the promotion of the event in the *Border City Gazette*, a local newspaper run by Serdar Bey, who often writes news before they happen. In his article about the play and the night at the theatre, for instance, he states that Ka, the celebrated poet, recited his latest poem "Snow," despite the fact that Ka has written no such poem yet.

[123] In the 1990s, the state forces, including the police, were predominated by the secularist and Kemalist ideology.

On the same day, before the event takes place, Ka meets with Lacivert (Blue), the leader of the Islamists, who is in hiding, to discuss the suicide epidemic. When they meet Lacivert tells Ka that girls who commit suicide are not even Muslims and that it is nonsense that they are taking a stance against headscarf ban. After leaving Lacivert's hiding place, Ka comes across Necip and Fazıl, two Islamist high school students and examples of *doppelgänger* characters common in Pamuk's novels. Necip, the more politically and socially active one, who dreams of becoming the world's first Islamist science-fiction writer, asks Ka questions concerning faith and atheism, and the alleged connection between losing one's faith and becoming suicidal.

Upon returning to the hotel, Ka receives inspiration and writes the poem "Snow," which will be followed by 18 other poems during his stay. In the hotel, he receives an invitation letter from Sheikh Saadettin, a semi-mystic religious leader whose lodge is a sacred place for many local followers. Here, he engages in another conversation on faith, religion, God, and the Western values with the sheikh. Derisively and under the effect of alcohol, while "he could feel the mocking devil inside him" (Pamuk *S* 100), he says to the Sheikh "I want to believe in the God you believe in and be like you, but, because there's a Westerner inside me, my mind is confused" (100). In the Sheikh's lodge the second poem, "Hidden Symmetry" comes to Ka.

On leaving the Sheikh's lodge, Ka first bumps into Necip in a teahouse, then in the company of Kadife he returns to the hotel to dine with Turgut Bey, İpek, Kadife, and Kadife's friend Hande (a headscarf girl who cannot decide whether to uncover herself or drop out of school). As the five are served their supper, the conversation turns to love and the headscarf ban. Meanwhile, Kars is getting ready for its first ever live broadcast. Although Ka has no intention to attend the event and recite his poem, he is convinced by

Turgut Bey and İpek that it might offend the locals if he did not. Thus he leaves the hotel for the national theatre.

After Ka recites his poem, the play is performed. In it, a woman burns her headscarf to express her own agency and independence. As furious fanatics drag her by her hair, brave Republican soldiers storm to the stage and save her. While the play is performed, religious people in the audience become uneasy at the representation of religion, eventually objecting with a near-riot towards the end of the performance. At this point, armed soldiers take the stage for their part and started to fire into the audience. Though the audience at first takes this to be a part of the play, it soon becomes clear that the bullets are real enough and the whole event is actually a staged coup d'état organised by Sunay Zaim and his retired colonel friend. Many are killed during the attack, including Necip.

A curfew is announced following the coup. Since the roads to the city are blocked by heavy snow, Sunay Zaim and other military ultras terrorise the city, hunting for dissident elements, particularly Kurdish nationalists and Islamists. They make random arrests, torture and kill people. Despite the curfew, Ka continues to move around the city meeting people while dogged by police spies and watched by the secret service. He meets Lacivert once again and cajoles him into signing a joint declaration with the representative of other ideological parties such as Kurdish nationalists, communists, and Islamists, against the coup. He promises Lacivert and all other parties that he will have this statement printed in a German Newspaper through his journalist friend Hans Hansen. Ka's negotiation of this statement is entirely motivated by his desire to make love with İpek, who has told him that while her father, Tugut Bey, is in the hotel she cannot sleep with Ka. Turgut Bey has not left the hotel for ages and seems even more reluctant to do so with snow everywhere and the curfew. Ka coaxes this holdover communist to take part

in the joint declaration on account of his faith in democracy, thus luring him out of the hotel. Finally making love with İpek, Ka already starts to design their future together in Frankfurt even as, deep inside, he has a nagging fear that such bliss is denied to him.

Along with Turgut Bey and Kadife, Lacivert and Fazıl, the other representatives all come together in a room in another hotel, Asia Hotel. Following a very heated discussion over the West, Islam, and being at margins that reveals the love-hate relationship between Turkish people (nationalists, Islamists, and secular-Westernist all included) and the West, the parties sign the declaration. After this violent and extended second climax, Lacivert is caught by Sunay Zaim, who sees the mini-coup as his best artistic achievement yet and decides to stage another performance, which again will be telecasted and open to the public. As a condition for Lacivert's release, he requires that Kadife take part in the play as the girl who throws away her headscarf. After Ka's negotiation, both Lacivert and Kadife accept the offer, and Sunay releases Lacivert.

During the play, Kadife will be forced to uncover herself by Sunay, and Sunay will be shot down by Kadife. The master theatre impresario, however, prepares one more a garish surprise for his audience, handing Kadife a loaded gun, and having her kill him on the stage. Military ultras, meanwhile, locate Lacivert, organize a raid and kill him. By then, the roads are opened and the city is reconnected to the world. Military officers retake control and demand that Ka leave the city on the next train for security reasons. Despite learning about a love affair between İpek and Lacivert hours before his departure and having a meltdown, Ka nevertheless sends for İpek to join him. Realising that she does not love Ka enough and suspecting that it was he who gave away Lacivert's place, İpek changes her mind and stays in Kars. Desperate, Ka leaves the city for Frankfurt, where he succumbs to ennui and despair once again. He is assassinated by an Islamist fundamentalist later on.

The novel is set in the extremely charged political climate towards the end of the 1990s, but the socio-political and historical context covers the whole history of Republican secularisation and modernisation. In this context, four interconnected political and social issues of the time constitute the novel's four-cornered narrowly political context: (i) the Kurdish conflict and Kurdish religio-political context, (ii) the rise of radical Islam, or Turkish Hezbollah, (iii) the headscarf issue, (iv) and the female suicide epidemic. From the point of view of the contextual richness, *Snow* has few rivals. It is an extremely challenging and demanding reading, particularly for foreign readers.[124] Yet the text is widely acclaimed as Pamuk's best for various reasons, including its successful navigating between narrowly political and local questions and the broader universal context (*e.g.*, the rise of radical Islam and September 11), as well as its convincingly unbiased treatment of conflicting ethno-national and religious groups, who are put into dialogue throughout the novel.

To demonstrate the novel's merit in this sense, and to grasp its meaning in the first semantic horizon, we first need to attend to all these politico-historical contexts, or subtexts. For the first one, that of the Kurdish conflict and Kurdish religio-political context, which is, actually, registered throughout the novel more subtly, providing a framing super-context *in toto* rather than being complementary sub-context, we should briefly summarise the Kurdish context in relation to the question of religion, secularisation, and the rise of radical Islam in the Kurdish region. Let us leave the Kurdish context at this point and turn to the other three contexts, the rise of radical Islam or Turkish Hezbollah, the headscarf issue, and the female suicide epidemic.

[124] Pamuk himself evidently was aware of this, as towards the end of the novel Fazıl tells Orhan, the narrator and shadow writer of the novel: "If you write a book set in Kars and put me in it, I'd like to tell your readers not to believe anything you say about me, anything you say about any of us. No one could understand us from so far away" (435).

As Azade Seyhan points out, Pamuk's profound analysis of intricate and conflicting relations among various ethnic and religious groups in *Snow* is very much influenced by what he referred to as the two of the best books of 2001: Müjgan Halis's *Batman'da Kadınlar Ölüyor* (Women Are Dying in Batman, 2001), about the suicide epidemic, and Ruşen Çakır's *Derin Hizbullah* (Deep Hezbollah, 2001), about the rise of the Turkish Hezbollah (Seyhan 101-102).

Pamuk had clearly studied Halis's book meticulously, building on its discussion of the main causes for such epidemic among young women in the city through a careful analysis of relevant reports and in-depth interviews with women who failed at their suicide attempts as well as the family members of suicides. As Halis points out, the epidemic was not limited to Batman but was rather a common problem in other cities of the region in the same period, at the end of the 1990s (22). According to a report issued by the Diyarbakır Women's Platform in November 2000, 303 women and girls attempted to commit suicide; of these, 16 died (Halis 21). What made the Batman case so popular in the media, according to Halis's work, was the local newspapers' success in carrying the relevant news to the national media (22).[125]

Reports issued after the investigation of the Batman cases by the Family Research Institute and the Directorate of Religious Affairs blamed, in general, stark underdevelopment, poverty and strictly traditional, feudal, and patriarchal social structures, combined with the happy and shiny portrayals of Turkey in TVs and magazine programmes, which downplayed the difficulty of its female audience's lives, for the epidemic (Halis 23). These reports listed, in specific, four main reasons for suicide as

[125] In the Batman region, the national average female suicide rate which stabilised at around 3.00 in the second half of the 1990s, was tripled at 9.9, making the region, together with China, a unique place where female suicide rates exceed rates for men (Bağli and Sev'er 61).

domestic violence and abuse (in 47 cases), disease (in 29), economic hardship (in 16), and love affairs (in 19) (Halis 22). Halis states that although these reasons were partly correct, the reports failed to mention that the region had been devastated by internal war for the last 17 years and had become a site of conflict between the state, the PKK, and Hezbollah for the last 5 years and was still under emergency rule (Halis 23). To Halis, the reports' stated reasons were euphemisms for patriarchy and male authority-driven crimes. What was euphemised as love affairs were in many cases honour killings, very young women being forced into marriage (so that their fathers and brothers can gain the bride price) or forced to become a second or third wife to men older than their own fathers, or child brides who were swapped (in conformity with *berdel* tradition, known as sister-swapping, the exchange of young women) by their fathers, brothers, uncles, or other male relatives who sought to avoid paying the bride price to get a wife, a second wife, a third wife, or even a fourth wife. Put differently, "[p]overty and patriarchy form a dangerous matrix in women's lives" in this excessively anti-women context (Bağli and Sev'er 67). In addition to already very strict socio-cultural structures, the destructive impacts of internal war and interminable conflicts made life for Kurdish women unbearable. As Halis emphasised, this suicide epidemic was a refusal of the undemocratic world and intentional underdevelopment and economic hardship these women lived in; it was a stark symptom of deep-rooted social trauma (30). In a way, Kurdish women's suicides marked a rejection of denial and repression as the only weapons available to fight against such an abusive and dispossessing socio-pathological system.

In the novel, Ka faces many challenges as he investigates the suicide epidemic. Clearly influenced by examples and recounts of Halis's work, the tragic and intense suicide stories give a very honest picture of the difficult lives women were leading in the Kurdish region in the 1990s—though this was by no means restricted to the Kurdish

region or the 1990s. Leading restricted, oppressed, and deprived lives, these young women were generally denied of almost any sort of individual freedom—educational or professional pursuits, interaction with the other sex or even with anyone outside of the household. They were often members of large families that were very traditional, pious, and disadvantaged (mostly traumatised victims of forced migration). Pamuk captures the true tragedy in the following passages:

> But the suicide stories he heard that day would haunt him for the rest of his life. It wasn't the poverty, or the helplessness, or the insensitivity that Ka found shocking in these stories. Nor was it the constant beatings to which the girls had been subjected; or the conservatism of their fathers, who wouldn't even let them go outside; or the constant surveillance of jealous husbands; or the lack of money. What shocked and frightened Ka was the manner in which these girls had killed themselves: abruptly, without ritual or warning, in the midst of their everyday routines. (Pamuk 13)

The reason for such sudden and unexpected conduct is the fact that living in extremely small houses with large families, most of the girls had very little privacy, if any. Thus, they would carry the thought of suicide with themselves for weeks until they would finally find a relatively private time to kill themselves: "Ka found it strangely depressing that the suicide girls had found hardly any privacy or time even to kill themselves. Even after swallowing their pills, even as they lay quietly dying, they had had to share their rooms with others" (Pamuk 16). This pithy summary captures well the abysmal deprival of subjectivity and the depressingly limited state of freedom for these women.

Pamuk linked this suicide epidemic with the headscarf ban in the novel, calling attention to the shared patriarchal and authoritarian structures, whether state or familial, behind the denial and oppression of female subjectivity and freedom. Although the ban had been applied throughout the 1980s and 90s, it was not uniformly enforced and generally did not dramatically affect students' education. Towards the end of the 1990s, however, students with headscarves and thousands of young women began facing severe

discrimination and had to either wear wigs or take off their headgear to be able to attend their classes and sit in exams. Many were expelled or dropped out. Many others suffered emotionally and were traumatised.

The veiling issue became "a decisive force in the radicalisation of the Islamist movement" and resulted in the mass mobilisation of Islamists who had remained silent for decades (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 2). What was surprising for the general public, and particularly for Kemalist secularists, was that the majority of protestors were women, veiled female students. With this unexpected reaction from religious women and students, the issue, in no time, revealed once again the deep socio-cultural cleavages between Westernist secularists and Islamists (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 2). The testimonies and memoirs of this period reveal the severity of the situation and how much young women suffered from the ban. A sophomore in the Istanbul Faculty of Medicine-*Çapa*, N.A., for example, wrote in her journal:

> I now realize that the headscarf is not a piece of cloth. It is a part of me. If I didn't wear it, I would feel naked. And I know that the moment I took it off, I would turn into a wreck. Not that I never commit a sin, but none is comparable to uncovering, none is eternal. If I would take off my headscarf, however, a feeling [of sinfulness] would ruin me: every morning when I looked at the mirror I would see a sinful face. Thus, I sacrifice my education so as not to experience this, and I resist and do not take my headscarf off. (cited in Şişman, *Başörtüsü Mağdurlarından* 33)[126]

Memoirs and diaries of these young women, most of whom were in their early twenties, express similar sentiments as those above and are full of resentment, disappointment, and vexed feelings towards those who followed the official rules, *e.g.*, teachers, security forces, principals. It is clear that most of these young women could not

[126] Başörtüsünün basit bir bez parçası olmadığını şimdi daha iyi idrak ediyorum. Başörtüsü benim bir parçam. Onu takmazsam kendimi çıplak hissedeceğimi biliyorum. Ve onu çıkardığım anda benden geriye bir enkazın kalacağını da biliyorum. Hiç günah işlemiyor değilim. Ama hiçbirisi başımı açmak gibi değil, onların sürekliliği yok. Oysa başörtüsü çıkardığımda bir his beni mahvedecektir: her sabah aynaya bakarken günahkâr bir yüze bakıyor olduğumu hissetmek. İşte bunları yaşamak istemediğim için eğitimimi feda ediyor ve başörtümü çıkarmama konusunda direniyorum...

properly understand the reasons and political, social, and historical sources and structures that brought about such injustice, *viz.*, the profound historical roots of gender inequality and women subordination, patriarchal construction of society, and the human rights violations in Turkey, as there is not any reference to or remarks about these issues. Put differently, these young women did not have a critical vocabulary to understand the question fully and speak for themselves. Therefore, not surprisingly, their protests and rightful standing against the state authority were manipulated and used by opportunist Islamist politics and groups. Their resistance to the unjust authority turned into victimisation and suffering of the Islamic self, and then into a political leverage to bring Islamist men to rule.

What was even more frustrating, as female writers like Cihan Aktaş and Halime Toros have correctly and boldly demonstrated in their novels and stories, was the fact that during this period most of the Islamist men who were standing by their sides as alleged comrades, were impertinently offering marriage (often being second or third wives) to the headscarf girls as individual salvation. In the last analysis, these girls meant three things: (i) a *domestic support* for the Islamist man who deserved such reward since he was praised by God by simply being a man and having found the true way in the Islamist order through his superior intellect, reason, conscience, and morality; (ii) a *religious signature* for the Islamist man who wanted to keep the *status quo* intact both inside and outside, that is to say, while collaborating and compromising with secular and Kemalist authority, protecting and relieving his Islamist identity and conscience, and (iii) *political leverage* to public and electoral manipulation. In Fatma Barbarosoğlu's apt description, the headscarf question belonged to a higher and broader horizon than mere partisan politics, but in Turkey, the issue was *particised* before it was politicised, that is to say, it was used by Islamist parties for electoral gains (51).

According to Çakır, there were four aspects to the headscarf question: (i) the *religious dimension* (young women were covering their heads because of their faith and religious commitments), (ii) the *political dimension* (the headscarf protests were embraced immediately as the reaction in Islamist circles to the Kemalist, secularist, and modernist system), (iii) the *human rights dimension* (the headscarf ban was eventually considered a human right violation), and (iv) the *gender dimension* (it was ultimately a women's question) (58-59). Since those young women were not ready to be subjects of such multifaceted and complicated questions, in no time Islamist men took over their movement[127] and, as Çakır noted, from that moment on, the headscarf as a women's issue was lost (*Direniş ve İtaat* 76).[128] As Umut Azak reminds us, "the headscarf ban in public institutions unjustly discriminates against veiled women by denying them a career that men with similar religious leanings can pursue" (97). In this sense, the headscarf ban, too, was yet another malady of a malformed and malfunctioning democratic system and modernisation in Turkey.

Indeed, to be able to comprehend the headscarf conflict fully one should put it in the broader picture of the history of Turkish modernisation and secularisation. This is to

[127] Merve Kavakçı's case stands as a very good example here. As Kavakçı maintains in her book *Başörtüsüz Demokrasi: Tarih İçinde Tarih* (Unveiled Democracy: History in History, 2004), while male representatives of her party were discussing the course of action, after Kavakçı was discarded from the parliament because of her headscarf, behind the closed doors, no one was asking her opinion. "I could not help but think: Had I been a male deputy, would they be able to make decisions on my behalf […]?" (cited in Yılmaz, "Küresel İslam 808). Kavakçı further reports that those male deputies who in pre-election rallies promised the masses to advocate for the headscarf easily asked her to take her headscarf off (Yılmaz, "Küresel İslam" 808).

[128] Apart from their failure to develop a proper critical vocabulary, staying in control as the subjects of their own case, Islamist women's reluctance to coalesce and collaborate with other subjugated groups and resilient movements also contributed to their failure, hindering them from a transfer of knowledge and experience. As Aktaş points out, the headscarf issue was a maturing experience for veiled woman but it was obstructive, too, because her agenda was so occupied with her own problem that she hardly showed any interest in other oppressed groups and their experiences ("Bacıdan Bayana" 39). And when on some rare occasions she did, for example, when she supported the silent sit-in protests of the Saturday Mothers [*Cumartesi Anneleri*, Kurdish mothers who have been coming together for their disappeared children, most of whom had probably killed by state forces], she caused a cringe in the spines of Islamist leaders (Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat* 62).

be done in the next level of analysis, but now let us move to another corner of the politico-historical context in the novel, Hezbollah and the rise of Islamic radicalism. Thanks to the relatively liberal and democratic climate secured by the new constitution, certain developments in the 1960s influenced the rise of the Islamist movement in Turkey. With the establishment of *Imam Hatip* Schools and the Faculty of Theology in Ankara, not only did religious education become available but also, because many graduates of these schools had proper knowledge of Arabic, Islamic scholarship gained a new force. With the translations of the classical works of Egyptian, Iranian, and Pakistani Islamist intellectuals and the Western Orientalists into Turkish, Islamic studies was released from the predominance of traditional Islamic clergy.[129] As Çakır highlights, in this period the Turkish left, after parting its way with Kemalist ideology, became very active in the political arena and influenced the Turkish Islamist thought and movement. Concepts like colonialism, imperialism, the working class, social justice, and equality, which were taking a substantial place in leftist critical vocabulary, started to be discussed among Islamists, too (*Derin Hizbullah* 30). A counter-movement quickly developed from within the ranks of the left, forging a strong psycho-intellectual reaction against the old leftish thought and turning to more radical and revolutionary Islamist interpretations.[130] The Cold War period smoothed the way for reconciliation and collaboration between the state and Islamists. For Islamists, being convinced that the danger of losing religion and ungodliness was not coming from the state any longer but from communists, easily

[129] All these developments were of course significantly influenced by the rise and re-organisation of political and radical Islamist movements in Egypt, Iran, and the Middle East. For further reading see Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 17-29.

[130] In this period, texts like Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* (1964) and Mustafa al-Siba'i's *The Socialism of Islam* (1959) became handbooks of Islamists in Turkey who were striving to strike back at the Turkish left and communists (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 30-31).

conformed with the state's manipulation and mobilisation of Islamism against communism (Çakır, *Ayet ve Slogan* 275-76).

This period of reorganisation and consolidation was followed by the economic liberalisation and financial globalisation of the Özal period of the 1980s in which Turkish society moved quickly towards capitalist consumerism. Islamists, too, turned to this new life and society, with a fast-growing Anatolian Muslim bourgeoisie and a market for Muslim fashion, literature, popular arts, and lifestyle (White, *Muslim Nationalism* 182). Being a follower of the Naqshbandi order, a major Sunni spiritual order, Özal had great influence in integrating Islamists in the existing political and economic system (Çakır *Derin Hizbullah* 44). Smaller radical Islamist groups, during this period, turned to Iran, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. There came an abrupt end to this period, however, when a series of assassinations by radical Islamists against Kemalist, Marxist, and Kurdish intellectuals, journalists, and politicians, brought about Islamists' further marginalisation and reputation as sponsored terrorist gangs in the service of unknown forces (Çakır *Derin Hizbullah* 44). In no time, Hezbollah took the stage by storm.

Hezbollah's first attacks were mainly against PKK partisans. Playing on the PKK's name as "*Partiya Kafiran Kurdistan*" (Kurdistan Infidels' Party; PKK actually stands for "*Partiya Karkarên Kurdistan*," the Kurdistan Workers' Party), Hezbollah anathematised the party and its supporters as "serving Communism, murdering Muslims, and dividing the Kurdish Muslim community" (Gürbüz 168). Seeing Hezbollah as "a new strategy of attack by the oligarchic Republic," in Öcalan's words (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 55), the PKK overestimated Hezbollah in the beginning. According to an official report, during the 1991-95 bloody conflict over power in the region, around 700 partisans were killed in reciprocal attacks—200 Hezbollah militants and 500 PKK sympathisers (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 58). On April 4, 1993, the PKK declared a ceasefire, asserting that the

PKK-Hezbollah conflict was a Turkish state-designed slaughter of Kurds by Kurds themselves. This conflict, along with the victory of the Islamist Welfare Party [Refah Partisi] in Kurdish cities, paved the way for a self-critique of party politics *vis-à-vis* Islam within the PKK (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 59).

Hezbollah, after the ceasefire with the PKK, focused on the elimination of other religious organisations and the consolidation of power in the region, commencing a series of attacks on the rival Islamist group *Menzil*, killing many members of the group including the leader, Fidan Güngör. Hezbollah also assassinated many prominent religious figures such as the leader of *Zehra* organisation, a Kurdish Islamist organisation following Said Nursî's thought, İzzettin Yıldırım, and outspoken Islamic scholars like Konca Kuriş, once a radical Islamist who later adopted an Islamist-feminist voice and openly discussed the women question in Islam and women rights—in short, all those who criticised or challenge the leader, Hüseyin Velioğlu, and Hezbollah.

These brutal attacks on religious people and Islamist leaders and scholars, however, brought about a strike at the organisation's leading body. On January 17, 2000, in what became to be known publically as Operation *Beykoz*, state forces descended upon a centre of the organisation in Istanbul, killing the leader Velioğlu and capturing many important militants. In the aftermath, many gruesome videos of grave-houses [*mezar evler*] used by Hezbollah militants to torture, kill, and bury "their enemies," as well as dead bodies collected from such houses, occupied the national news programs and papers for some time. Islamists and their publication organs who had been watching Hezbollah's attacks on PKK sympathisers somewhat pleasingly joined secular media in demonising Hezbollah, emphasising the fact that the organisation was initially founded by the state against the rise of Kurdish movement, but eventually became a puppet of secret services like MOSSAD (Çakır, *Derin Hizbullah* 11). In the end, as Çakır points, Hezbollah

showed Turkey that secularism was the guarantor not only for loose believers, people of other faiths and sects and non-believers but also for religious people (*Derin Hizbullah* 220).

Pamuk integrates the rise of political and radical Islam into the novel through four main domains and four types of characters: (i) the tiny young man who shoots the director of the Education Institute and the outlawed young, charismatic Islamist leader, Lacivert, represent the *radical activist* domain; (ii) *Imam Hatip* high school students, Necip and Fazıl, and headscarf girls, Kadife and Hande, represent the *intellectual and educational* domain; (iii) İpek's ex-husband Muhtar, who runs for local governor from an Islamist party, represents the *political* domain; and (iv) Sheikh Saadettin, the highly respected and influential local figure, represents the *traditional and public* domain. Pamuk not only comprehensively reflects the question of religion and secularism in Turkey with its all sides and actors, but also insightfully captures the distinctive characteristics of each group and domain: the grotesque kindness and sensitivity of the radical Islamists, as shown through the recording of the murder and the dialogues with Lacivert; the unquenchable desire for intellectual dialogue and burlesque fear of atheism and communism of the intellectual and educational domain; the opportunism of the political domain which is characterised by Muhtar's disturbing and sly reconciliatory and submissive political moves, and the seductiveness of the traditional and public domain through the narcoleptic peacefulness of Sheikh Saadettin and his chamber, which no doubt points the inviting and accommodating nature of *volk*-Islam and tariqas.

Pamuk adopts the same narrative strategy to portray secularists, too. Here, he creates four major domains and types of characters to demarcate the complexity and plurality of secular identity. Ka, the failed exilic poet who, despite his modern and secular mind falls afoul of the state because of his leftist views, together with his friend Orhan,

the shadow writer, represent *leftist* or *liberal secular/modern* intellectual Turks. Turgut Bey and his daughter İpek, despite Turgut Bey's revolutionary past, with their current political numbness, conformist life, and openness towards all other identities mark what could be called the public or "*volk*-secular," parallel to "*volk*-Islam," domain. Sunay Zaim and Funda Eser, on the other hand, are typical Kemalist partisan artists, educators, and intellectuals of Republican era—they have really no time to think and understand the context properly because of the urging desire to get to the level of Western modernisation at once; they represent *intellectual secular/modernist domain*. Finally, Z. Demirkol, who as soon as the staged coup administration declares a curfew, starts to hunt alleged enemies of the secular state (*i.e.,* Islamists and Kurds), represents the militant and fundamentalist domain of the secular-modern, or the *ultra-secular/modern* domain.

Pamuk achieves this multifaceted portrayal of characters and domains through two strategic moves: first, he employs passages and transfers between and within domains by having some characters convert and creating *doppelgänger* for others (two characteristics of *Pamukian deconstruction*). Secondly, Pamuk creates characters who harbour the traits of multiple domains, *e.g.*, one character who is both *volk*-secular and intellectual-modernist to varied degrees. In executing these strategies, Pamuk uses a plethora of means, causes, and contexts, including transformative love, personal benefits, mystical and metaphysical quests, religious awakening and enlightenment, spiritual and transcendental epiphanies, psycho-pathological factors, socio-economic reasons, artistic ambitions, and so forth. He makes particular use of his long-standing fictional type, the convert, which is abundant in *Snow*, Muhtar, Lacivert, Kadife, and Z. Demirkol. With these conversion stories, for instance Demirkol's story of Marxist-to-ultra-nationalist and fascist, or Muhtar's Marxist poet-to-Islamist politician story, Pamuk successfully shows how radicalness easily travels and is transferable between opposite ideological poles.

Through such configuration of the domains and characters, Pamuk not only represents constantly shifting ideological borders through which he draws attention to the complexity and fluidity of identity politics, but also staunchly shows how blurred are "the lines between religious inflexibility and secular despotism, describing *both* positions as essentially fundamentalist, *both* dedicated to silencing the other" (Santesso 128). Indeed, as Göknar puts it, "[e]very ideological position is ridiculed and exposed for its hypocrisy. The only figure left standing is the dissident writing-subject who has conveyed the novel as a devastating indictment of Turkish political culture" (186). Pamuk's exceptional gift is to create distinct voices and points of view in relation to one another—almost all intentionally kept unfinished or continued in the other's point of view. In *Snow*, antagonism, dissidence, and opposition are as much relational and integrative as sympathy, resemblance, and agreement.

In all of these tactics, Pamuk vividly portrays the intricately criss-crossed site that is ethno-national and religious identity politics, as well as the complexity of the questions arising from these politics. As actors, factors, definitions, and contexts are liable to change, merge, and diverge constantly, the symbolic resolution that Pamuk brings to these deep political and social questions is therefore a critical interposition that reveals the unchanging structures in the socio-political system: psychological, intellectual, social, and ideological structures that annihilate differences and unite antagonistic forces. In other words, through *Pamukian deconstruction*, Pamuk deconstructs all normative and legitimate boundaries and points out that the only working solution to the Turkish question, whether the Islamist-secular conflict or the Kurdish imbroglio, is to imagine beyond the oppositions and boundaries, challenge the status quo, the state, and its homogeneity-dictating and conflict-reproducing authoritarian structures. To understand this solution it is imperative that we analyse the Turkish question in further depth and

details. To this end, we now turn to the second level in the Jamesonian model, where we focus on the general history of secularisation and Islamisation as well as the history of conflict between the two.

Studies on the origin and rise of Turkish nationalism have a general tendency to focus on the secular character of Republican nationalism, pointing only to a few episodic exceptions (*e.g.*, the case of non-Muslim groups in Turkey, the exchange of non-Muslim Turkish-speaking Karamanlis with Greek-speaking Muslim Turks, and the like).[131] The decisive role of Islam and Islamist movements, on the other hand, has generally been ignored. Paralleling this has been a longstanding belief that the borders and characteristics of Turkish nationalism were formulated and finalised to a large extent during the Republican regime (1923-1946). This outlook, however, masks the truth, as Çakır correctly underscores, that Islamists have been the most influential and powerful "shaping force" in the last century of Turkish history (*Ayet ve Slogan* 276). Particularly for the last four decades, since the 1980s, it could be argued that from the unfolding of democratisation and modernisation to economic development, from political and administrative systems to constitutional and juridical reforms or setbacks, Turkey's fate has been sealed by Islamists. The definitions of the Turk and Turkish nationalism, too, have naturally been formulated and reformulated by Islamists.

What gave such power to Islamists were, paradoxically enough, the very political forces that tried to *whitewash Islam out of Turkish identity*. While the complete story of Islamism and secularism in Turkey extends beyond the confines of this chapter, given the context of *Snow*, it is worth recounting the history from the late Ottoman era, when modernisation and Westernisation became an urgent necessity towards saving the empire.

[131] For a broader look at the relation between religion and nationalism see Brubaker 3-12.

At this point, Islam, along with its ideals and values, had already given signs of becoming an obstacle in the path of Westernisation. Still, as İsmail Kara emphasizes, at each step of Ottoman Westernisation, there was a serious attempt to reconcile modernisation with religion. Republicaner Turkey, however, abandoned this reconciliatory approach in the realm of politics, religion, and Westernisation (27-28). Like some of the late revolutionary Ottoman intellectuals and administrators, Kemalist modernisers, too, Şerif Mardin asserts, could not comprehend the fact that Islam had crucial functions that were not observable at the manifest level; with their "cultural optimism" they thought it possible to transfer Islam's function in society to another structure (*Direniş ve İtaat* 147). On this, according to Mardin, orthodox advocates of Sunni Islam and Republican reformists were in agreement, for both overlooked the role and importance of *volk* Islam, *i.e.*, everyday Islam as lived and perceived by common people. Yet it was *volk* Islam that brought about extra potency and function to local religious figures and leaders (*Direniş ve İtaat* 148), and thereby had, and still have, mass political appeal.

Although Islamism[132] originally aimed at saving the Ottoman state from collapse through a unifying religious ideology, it could not compete with ever-sharpening ethnic and religious boundaries and the rise of nationalisms; it thus failed eventually, after the First World War (Kurtoğlu 204-205). Beginning at that time, Islamism became an ideological parasitic, relying on and taking refuge in Turkish nationalism *vis-à-vis* the state's secular and anti-Islamist politics. Kemalism's strictly secularist and authoritarian

[132] Islamism, [*İslamcılık* in Turkish], as defined by Ali Bulaç, is "an attempt to create a world suitable for moral, spiritual, cultural, and social values of Islam and the struggles that are faced to achieve this—in different realms and on varying levels—by a group of cultural, political, and social leaders, who have specific demands and claims in various domains" ("İslâm'ın Üç Siyaset Tarzı" 50). Bulaç maintains that as agreed on by many scholars, Islamism is a "product of modern world" and despite seeming strikingly paradoxical from an external perspective, it basically is a "modernizing project," a project to create a new authentic Islamic identity, that is to say, to link Islamic world up to a historical process which was not created by it, through using the instruments of modern thought ("İslâm'ın Üç Siyaset Tarzı" 51).

politics, and the banishment of Islam from social and political spaces brought about its confinement to the private sphere, with the result that Islamists were left grasping at nationalist straws, as religious platforms were forbidden to them. Paradoxical as such, nationalism became one leg of ideological tripod not only for Kemalists, as stated by Cagaptay (2), but also for Islamists—together with their positions (pro- or anti-) towards secularism and Westernisation. The founders of the Republic saw Islam as a threat of counter-revolution that needed to be taken under the guardianship of the state. This, however, not only unlocked and provoked further political potential within Islam but also backfired with the politicisation of religion's social role and function (Kurtoğlu 210).

Put crudely, Turkish secularisation resulted in further Islamisation of the country. Drawing on Charles Taylor's distinction between "passive" and "assertive" modes of secularism, Fuat Keyman argues that Turkish model[133] is an exemplary of the latter, in which "the state excludes religion from the public sphere and plays an 'assertive' role as the agent of a social engineering project that confines religion to the private domain" (*Ayet ve Slogan* 144). Keyman argues that this assertive *modus operandi* of Turkish secularism and the unfolding of Turkish modernism have brought further consolidation and omnipresence of religion into identity construction, as well as an increasing role in social life as a "symbolic system" that continues to be a primary source of meaning for

[133] As İştar Gözaydın points out, *laicité/laicism/laic* refers to the state's close monitoring and controlling of religion in the public space, whereas *secularism* means the separation of state and religion, although "*laiklik*" (Turkish word for laicité) has long been the normative concept—used in media and thought in schools and preferred by Republican cadre as well (9). According to Göle, Turkish secularism is not an "authoritarian derivative of French 'laïcité,'measured in terms of its gaps, inconsistencies, and deficiencies regarding the French ideal-model," but a unique experience ("Manifestations of the Religious-Secular Divide" 43). Ideas, Göle argues, never travel and arrive to their new contexts without undergoing some sort of changes and adjustments: "we never simply produce a replica of the original usage; every reiteration transforms the original meaning, adding new meanings to it" ("Manifestations of the Religious-Secular Divide" 43). Therefore, instead of focusing on the Turkish model as a secularism that lags behind the Western model, lacking liberal pluralism and religious and sectarian impartiality, Göle finds it more meaningful "to depict the ways secularism is semantically adopted, politically reinvented, collectively imagined, and legally institutionalized" (Göle, "Manifestations of the Religious-Secular Divide" 44).

individual and collective identity, rather than its demise (*Ayet ve Slogan* 144). In other words, Islam continued to maintain its crucial position as a main constituent and a master reference for Turkish identity inside and outside of Turkey, culturally and politically, and in high and low strata of society.

The society that the Republican modernisers zealously tried to Westernise was shaped and nurtured by traditional culture and Islam. This society lacked any defence except a subtly articulated reactionary, religious conservatism, which served as a security blanket for finding some measure of comfort against the imposed politico-cultural practices and reforms, the Republican positivist-authoritarianism and laicism, [134] and the sudden socio-political and cultural termination of Islamic culture (Kurtoğlu 211). The result was an infliction of a defensive and reactionary culture, a "conservatist nationalism" as Kara puts it, whose symptoms have often revealed in Islamist intellectuals' decidedly reactive, faltering, and defensive arguments and attitudes in the face of Republican ideology and its secularist politics (Kara 18).

Kemalists' strong belief in the essentialness of secularisation for full-scale modernisation of country brought about a Kemalist hegemonic discourse in which Islam and Muslim societies are constantly represented as the orient, *viz.*, culturally differentiated from the ideal norm, the modern West. In this mentality, Islam is synonymous with the orient, and the de-orientalisation of the Turkish society simply meant its de-Islamisation (Sayyid 69). Islam was no longer "a master signifier of the

[134] Despite their derogatory outlook on religion, the Republican cadre never abstained from using religion whenever they needed. As Kara and White argue in detail, the most handy instrument of Republican secularism for social influence and political manipulation has been, no doubt, *Diyanet*, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, [*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, est. 1924), which trains, supervises, and appoints all religious specialists, *viz.*, *imams* and *muftis*, religious institutions and education, determines and distributes Friday sermons, publish and translates religious texts (White, *Muslim Nationalism* 28; Kara 28). Despite allegedly strict secularist ideology and politics, *Diyanet* has always been a chameleonic lapdog, loyally following each and every sovereign ideology in Turkey. Kara appropriately calls *Diyanet* "the institution for the religious affairs of the state rather than of Muslims" (78).

political order" but a socio-cultural deviation and a political threat for modernisation (Sayyid 70). As Göle points out, it was a historical irony that the Turks, who have been symbolised as the barbarian and Muslim other to Europeans, were now creating their own barbarians in the form of Muslims—with the Kurds to be added—in order to become, or at least persuade themselves that they could become, civilised ("The Quest for the Islamic Self" 85).

Göle aptly indicates how this Kemalist desire for modernisation and thus Westernisation, and its orientalist ramifications, have impinged upon the establishment of true democracy in Turkey. Accordingly, "throughout republican history, all kinds of differentiation—ethnic, ideological, religious, and economic—have been viewed not as natural components of a pluralistic democracy but as sources of instability and as threats to unity and progress" ("The Quest for the Islamic Self" 84). Allowing Republican modernist elites "to legislate and legitimate their essentially anti-liberal platform" (Göle, "The Quest for the Islamic Self" 84), this perspective ultimately created a culture of profound collective paranoia, which Pamuk masterfully hammered out in his novels. Islamists, too, and particularly Turkish-Islamists, have contributed to this paranoia and assertive modernisation through, for example, their reception of the other as potential threat, obsession with socio-political uniformity, and inability to think beyond binary oppositions. It is not so surprising, therefore, that despite having arisen out of Kemalist repression, the Turkish-Islamist movement has developed a severe empathy deficit—especially when it comes to criticising state policies towards others and showing solidarity with non-Islamist or non-Turkish oppressed groups.

This nationalist and assertive turn in the Islamist movement became more pronounced in the late 70s with the rise of one of the strongest Islamist political movements *Milli Görüş* (National Vision). This movement "linked Islam to nationalism

and had a strong chauvinist and racialist component based on Turkishness and Turkish blood and history" (White, *Muslim Nationalism* 39). From this time on, Turkish aspects of religious identity started to take precedence over Islamic ones. This new Turkish-Islamic nationalism, or, in Jenny White's formulation, *Muslim nationalism,* sacralises Turkishness of Islam in a fashion that is copycatted from Kemalists. Ultimately, as White puts, "[s]ecular and Muslim nationalisms, despite the animosity they have generated, may share more ideas about being Turkish than issues that divide them" (*Muslim Nationalism* 194).

In the emergence of "non-confrontational patterns of interaction between Islam and the state" (Turam 19), the role and importance of the Gülen Movement[135] and the Welfare Party has been immense. Emerging in the Turkish political stage towards the end of the 1980s, both movements started a steady and successful transition, which marked a constant evolution in power relations between the state and Islamists, developing from submission into engagement, then negotiation, and finally into association (Turam 10). Islamist parties, employing a conservative populist rhetoric,[136] are dominating the centre-

[135] Named after its leader Fethullah Gülen (b.1941), an extremely controversial politico-religious figure in contemporary Turkish history, *Gülen Movement* has been very influential in nationalisation and modernisation of Islamic identity through a jamaat-centred colossal financial and cultural network—composed of hundreds and thousands of branches, firms, and centres in the realms of media, education, health services, and trade (Yavuz, "Neo-Nurcular" 295). Although an offspring branch of *Nur* movement [thus being called *Neo-Nurcular*], Gülen and his followers never abstained from using politics in the process of consolidation of power and gaining legitimacy in movement's nascent phase—showing support to even most controversial state's policies and practices including the headscarf ban and military coups against rising Islamist politics, in September 12, 1980 and February 28, 1997. This power buttressing of Gülen movement could partly be explained with the chronic conservative, pro-*status quo*, and patriarchist structure built in Islamist movements in Turkey. Gülen movement never showed its liberal approach outside the economic realm, remaining downright conservative in women question and Kurdish conflict, and always prioritising the collective and the state benefits over the individual's ("Neo-Nurcular" 301-302).

[136] Tanıl Bora and Necmi Erdoğan defines conservative populism as a populism that exalts social subjects as the protector of traditions (632). In the political rhetoric and discourse of the centre-right parties, particularly Islamist parties, and Turkish Islamist writers, the elements and motifs of conservative populism show itself in an immensely melodramatic and agitation-drenched discourse and the extreme expression of antagonistic feelings towards the other (Bora and Erdoğan 634). Thus, both in literature and politics, themes like silencing the azan, turning mosques into stables for animals, and narratives of victimisation, oppression, violence, and agony faced by Muslims have always been excessively popular in Turkey (Bora and Erdoğan 634). In fact, thanks to the immense appeal of conservative populism in Turkey, it looks like heroic stoicism combined with a neurotic narcissism and collective paranoia will never leave Turkish politics and literature.

right today rather than being controlled by nationalist conservative parties—the AKP has reversed the positions for good (Çiğdem 29-30). Put differently, Islamist politics owes its success partly to Kemalist populism's failure to fill the persistent gap between people and administrators and partly to its chauvinist-nationalist character (Çiğdem 28).

In the end, like Republican modernisers, today's Islamists see conservative values and elements—*viz.,* authoritarianism, subservience to the state and the *status quo,* anti-pluralist democracy, and Turkish-Sunni supremacy—as the guarantor of the state's stability and integrity (Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hâli* 69). What has been really interesting is that just as in the past, when the differences between Islamists and seculars were sharper than ever, the woman issue was the most important domain of divergence. In this framing of both sharp and blurring boundaries of Islamist and secularist politics, in other words, women's bodies remained something always already politicised by male dominant politics. Parallel to the Republican outlook, in which the emancipation of women from the veil and traditional Islamic ways became both a means to and sign of reaching the ideal level of progress and modernisation (Göle "The Quest for the Islamic Self" 11; Şişman, *Sınırsız Dünyanın* 43), in the Turkish-Islamist outlook, too, women's bodies turned into mere identity markers for Islamist politics, which in time become as capitalist, nationalist, militarist, and statist as its arch-enemy.

Kemalist modernisers, who had controversially and contradictorily acted as guardians of secularism while never flinching from using religion to manipulate masses, had succeeded in constructing all manifest expressions of religious identity, particularly veiling, as a force of radicalism, backwardness, women's subservience and obscurantism (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 4). Through education and media, Republican modernisers

had been able to construct the headscarf as "an affront to contemporary notions of 'gender emancipation' and 'universal progress'" (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 4). Here, the headscarf issue, women's emancipation, and Islamist and Republican positions were framed by discussions over cultural versus technical modernisation. Just like late Ottoman intelligentsia, Islamists and conservatives, as in other Islamist movements and post-colonial contexts, found relief in differentiating material (technical and scientific) aspects of Western civilisation from spiritual (moral and cultural) ones, claiming that they already hold superiority over the West in the latter and therefore it would suffice to import the former. Republicans, however, tried to develop new formulas to annihilate their paradoxical position, *i.e.*, exalting the Turkish nation with its culture and history while following the Western model.

Ziya Gökalp's resourceful yet inconclusive theory of culture, which took civilisation and culture as complementary aspects of the same nation, was one such Republican formula.[137] In Gökalp's theory, the conservation of national culture is an imperative of civilisational progress, and Westernisation is possible only by preserving the essences of Turkish culture (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 45). Through the synthesis of "Turkisation, Islamisation, and Westernisation," Gökalp attempted to solve out the biggest challenges in Turkish modernisation, interpreting opposing forces—nationalism, religion, and Westernism—as complementary components of Turkish life that added up to create the new Turkish whole. Thanks especially to his more radical and romantic claims, *e.g.*, that Turks are the founders of civilisation and thus the Turkish nation is the only nation that did not have to detach from its traditions to enter civilisation (read:

[137] "The notion of nation is defined in regard to cultural elements in Gökalp's thought, and such an approach enabled him to use this concept to signify the passage to civilisation and the preservation of cultural essentials. In his writings, Gökalp distinguished the concept of culture from that of civilisation and contended that 'societies which are foreign to each other in terms of their cultures and religions may converge in civilisation'" (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 44-45).

Westernisation), Gökalp's theory of culture ultimately failed to eliminate from the Turkish context the inherited antagonism in the Islamic-Westerner axis.

The Islamist movement that came to rise after the 1980s in Turkey differed from previous ones in that it incorporated a new force into its political activities. Islamist women in this period, through organisations, associations, foundations, women's branches, and magazines and journals, became visible, mobile and active in Islamist movements and politics (Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat* 14). As Çakır points out, despite eventually bringing the Welfare Party to power through their door-to-door campaigns, however, Islamist women were hoodwinked and shunned by Islamist men, who had always been in charge when it came to presenting candidates and representatives (*Direniş ve İtaat* 11). Until it was forced out of power by the Turkish military in 1997 and banned from politics, the Welfare Party did not appoint a single female parliamentary candidate or mayor, nor did it have a single woman in city councils or party provincial committees[138] (Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat* 15). Islamist women's visibility did not in any way transform male dominance in Islamist politics. Once in power, Islamist men never talked about women and their issues but rather repeated the same discourse of denial: Some Islamist intellectuals even used female pseudonyms to draw more attention and sound more convincing when arguing that "there is no woman question in Islam" (Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat* 16).

Furthermore, Islamist women could not level a strong opposition to Islamist male dominance (with the notable exception of literary writing, particularly fiction). This was

[138] As of 2017, the figure for female representation in Islamic party, the AKP, stands at around 10 per cent, (34 of 317 deputies). This substantially low political representation appears quite heart-warming when compared to women representation in other areas, particularly in finance and economy. In *MUSIAD* (founded in 1990), an Islamic business and industrial organisation in Turkey, for example, of around 100 key positions, only three are held by women (Yılmaz, "Küresel İslam" 812).

partly due to their marginalisation by Islamist male authority (as well as by many secular and Kemalist feminist movements), but also partly due to their chronic indeterminacy towards feminism. Whenever they spoke of Islamist male hypocrisy and the oppressive, statist, ultra-nationalist, and authoritarian rule that Turkish-Islamist males advocated, they also marked their difference from feminist politics. Indeed, many Islamist women intellectuals, such as Nazife Şişman (b.1963) and Fatma Barbarosoğlu (b.1962), today, although at times adopting a critical feminist vocabulary, object to being identified as feminist because they disagree with feminism's approach to women in family and domestic structures as well as its exclusivist politics (Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat* 28). Another prominent reason for denouncing feminism is feminism's orientalist approach to Islam and Muslim women. According to Şişman, Western feminists tend to compare modern representations of secular society with those of traditional and pre-modern Islamic society and overstress the subservient position of Muslim women (*Emanetten Mülke* 121). Thus, rather than a feminist outlook, Şişman and many others opt for a critical female perspective.[139]

[139] There were, however, some who did not denounce feminist identification and even defended it against Islamist male hypocrisy. Ali Bulaç's controversial article in an Islamist newspaper, *Zaman* (March 17, 1987) is worth mention, since it not only reflects the majority of Islamist men's (intellectuals and politicians) view of feminism but also shows that Islamist women, though having some reservations about it, were ready to defend feminism against Islamist men's irritatingly patronising and debasing discourse. In his article, Bulaç argues that feminism is never needed in Muslim context. "Suggesting that 'skewed industrialisation and modernism' has contributed to the objectification of women, he maintains that it is the act of veiling, not feminism, that appears as the 'noble rebel' of women against this objectification. He considers feminism as a movement in the 'service to modernism,' which 'asks women to rebel against men' and results in the 'deterioration of the relationship between men and women'" (Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* 121-22). Bulaç reduces feminism to sexual freedom, promiscuity, misandry and homosexual proclivities, and define feminism as "a rebellious profession which orders women to rebel against men" [which I believe does not seem so egregious, but for an Islamist both being rebellious and rebelling against men is as blasphemous as it gets.] Bulaç concludes his article with following warning: "Feminist ladies, you have limited minds and your feet are not on the ground" [Feminist bayanlar, sizin aklınız kısa ve üstelik bir karış havada]. Note that, these words are an explicit reference to a derogatory saying in Turkish (*kadının saçı uzun aklı kısa*; women are long-haired, short-minded) indicating that women have no capacity for intellectual and logical thought. Many Islamist women, among them were activists and writers Mualla Gülnaz, Tuba Tuncer, Yıldız Kavuncu, and Halime Toros, levelled harsh responses to Bulaç's hypocritical article. Their reaction, however, was not welcomed by Islamist men and their patriarchist female supporters, and brought about further marginalisation of them (Çakır, *Direniş ve İtaat* 42).

Şişman, however, along with many Islamist male intellectuals, adopts a *defensive reductionism* that reduces feminism to Western feminism or to a political radicalism aiming at eliminating the male presence altogether, rather than a critical voice raised against patriarchy, androcentric bias, gender inequality, social injustice, and so forth. While reducing feminism to a modernist, Western, and orientalist/colonialist outlook Şişman and many others, hypocritically hide behind theory, hardly mentioning the bloody history of the abuse of women in Muslim societies, including honour killings, forced marriages, child brides, second-third-fourth wives, *etc.* Another problem regarding their outlook is that some female Islamist scholars have undertaken such monumental tasks as interpreting the most sacred and canonical texts of Islam, even the Qur'an and hadiths, as did Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal. If this is in their power, what, then, is holding Islamist women back from developing an Islamist-feminist critique of feminism? I argue that the answer to this is that there is a hierarchy constructed between their primal Islamic selves and their subordinated woman selves. According to Çakır, too, what turned the Islamist women's movement from resistance into submission was Islamist women's prioritising their *Islamicness* over their *womanness* (*Direniş ve İtaat* 139).

Part of what makes *Snow* a grand text is Pamuk's ability to portray such a dense and complex political and historical context: From the headscarf girls' struggle for subjectivity to Islamist male hypocrisy and the Kemalists' poorly conceived ambition to match European standards of progress, almost every aspect of this background finds fictional resonance in *Snow*. Pamuk's ingenious conceit is to point out how the main issues of divergence between antagonistic political and ideological poles are actually in close psychic and intellectual dependence; how the idea of the overarching other, the West, could easily erase all divergences, disputes, enmities, and isolations. *Snow*, through mainly two means, deconstructs given ideological oppositions between Islamists and

secularists and shows how the two actually ride *dos-à-dos* in the same carriage of authoritarianism and social control: first, through Ka's tongue-in-cheek dialogues with the representatives of these poles, and second, by bringing together all of them in one single platform, *i.e.*, in Sunay Zaim's performances and the secret meeting held in Hotel Asia.

Apart from some complementary points of agreement towards the Turkish state and nationalism (embracing and exalting), and the Kurdish question (denial and ignorance), Pamuk points out two major issues of simultaneous divergence and unanimity between Islamist and secularist forces: women and the West. In Pamuk's portrayal, both Kemalists and Islamists, adopt a patriarchal and authoritarian discourse towards the women issue. Both deny any subjectivity to headscarf girls and women who committed suicide. For both sides, those who commit suicide do it because either they want to cover a shameful love affair or try to draw some attention (77). A policeman, representing secular state force, barks at Ka as follows: "It's because people like you are writing about them in the Istanbul papers that these girls are committing suicide in the first place" (67). Pamuk's cynical insight into the Republican view of the women question finds a perfect expression through the buffoonery artisanship of partisan actors Sunay Zaim and Funda Eser. Their play about a girl who awakens from her Islamist slumber and burns her headscarf, already excessively animated, became a *bona fide* burlesque, taking seriously only by Islamist men. In the end, *Snow* aptly illustrates how for both Kemalist modernisers and Islamists, the headscarf issue—and the issue of women in general—is only leverage towards their own political ends. Freeing the woman from her headscarf and subjugated position (secularist) and supporting and protecting her religious rights and veil (Islamist), are, in this context, one and the same political move of authoritarian social engineering to attain power.

As for the second point, that of the positioning of Kemalist and Islamist ideologies in the face of the West, *Snow* shows in the most convincing way that whether pro- or anti-Westernisation, both ideologies garner an ambivalent Western-phobic ethos. That is to say, these ideologies at once harbour both desire and repulsion towards the West, desperately craving its approval and admiration but also hating it for steadfastly maintaining its superior position, in terms of advancement and power on a global scale. Both ideological groups develop a paranoid conviction that the West' ultimate agenda is to put an end to Islam and to Turkish integrity. Pamuk illustrates this in Ka's organising a secret meeting of both sides in the Hotel Asia to sign a joint declaration against the staged coup, to be published in a German paper that turns out not to exist. The whole act is actually an elaborate hoax designed by Ka to get private time with İpek. Thus, this scene in the Hotel Asia, first functions to reveal the enigmas of various individual and national selves—Turkish nationalist, Kurdish nationalist, Islamist, Marxist-leftist, liberal, and so forth—in relation to one another, and the profound psychological and intellectual distortion and obsession that people of Turkey suffer in the face of the idea of the West.

Here, Lacivert's proclamation before the secret meeting takes place come to the fore and reflects the feelings of the majority of the Turkish people:

> Will the West, which takes democracy, its great invention, more seriously than the word of God, come out against this coup that has brought an end to democracy in Kars? [He stopped here to make a grand gesture.] Or are we to conclude that democracy, freedom, and human rights don't matter, that all the West wants is for the rest of the world to imitate them like monkeys? Can the West endure any democracy achieved by enemies who in no way resemble them? I have something to say to all the other nations that the West has left behind: Brothers, you're not alone. (233)

Note the grudging, condescending, and yet aggressive tone that reflects the effect of conflicting complexes of superiority and inferiority. Despite all its Western-phobia, the West—which is, notably, a single entity to the Islamist and secularist imagination here—

is still the master reference; otherwise, why should the Western reaction to a military coup in Turkey matter?[140]

Seeing the West and Westernisation as an iron cage in which no place is allocated for faith, moderation, and morality, a large cast of characters crossing lines of class, ideology, and gender express their views of the West. This scene allows Pamuk to unravel a deep Western-phobic vulnerability built into the Turkish political imagination—whether Islamist, Kurdish, Marxist, or Turkish nationalist—and to show how this vulnerability brings about a spectrum of reactions to the West, from grudging respect to blinding hatred, from monomaniac national resentment to narcissistic religious arrogance. Pamuk successfully mirrors the sempiternal fury, resentment, and sadness of the Turkish nation and how the *fear of de-authenticisation*, *i.e.*, becoming just another nation and just another religious community among all others, exhausts Turkish individual and national potency. For instance, Lacivert says, "The people of Europe are not our friends, they're our enemies. And it's not because we're their enemies, it's because they instinctively despise us" (277). Another Islamist youth says, "I'm proud of the part of me that isn't European. I'm proud of the things in me that the Europeans find childish, cruel, and primitive. If the Europeans are beautiful, I want to be ugly; if they're intelligent, I prefer to be stupid; if they're modern, let me stay pure." (285)

This fear and its effects are manifest throughout Pamuk's writing, but *Snow* is exceptionally successful in depicting it due to the advantages of the peripheral context.

[140] Another perfect detail in the novel is that despite all these politically charged and ideologically sharpened individual and collective worlds, there is yet a larger world in which neither politics nor ideological battles have any meaning or implication and everyday problems and survival is the only concern. To show this, Pamuk shows how some people, particularly unemployed youth, perceive the coup: "These unemployed youths gave no hint of understanding that the military had stepped in to take a position against Kurdish nationalism and keep 'religious fanatics' from winning the municipal elections. Instead, they seemed to think that last night's events marked the beginning of a new age, in which immorality and unemployment would no longer be tolerated; it was as if they thought the army had stepped in expressly to find them jobs" (187).

Snow's Anatolian and provincial context enables Pamuk to throw the ambivalence of the *fear of de-authenticisation* into sharper relief because, true to Pamuk's observations of Turkish society, nowhere is this fear more clear-cut than in the Anatolian periphery. As Zafer Doğan points, the centre-periphery conflict is a common trope in Pamuk, and the provinciality [*taşralılık*] in his writings is defined as a "wounded consciousness," a state of feeling constantly at the margins (8). Pamuk blames Republican pressure to Westernize for this. According to him, like in all provincialised societies and cultures, for Turkish people the whole universe begins and ends with their provincial world (*Öteki Renkler* 277). *Snow,* then, accurately depicts the connection between this *ambivalent provincialism,* a distorted state of consciousness and unconsciousness in which the subject simultaneously feels as if he/she were the centre of the world while also feeling the anxiety, pressure, and resentment of being at the margins.

Pamuk most vividly portrays the *fear of de-authenticisation* through a series of examples of Turkish paranoia culture. He speaks about the paranoia culture in Turkey in an article in *Öteki Renkler*:

> Paranoia culture in our country is overwhelmingly rich, but this is not a clever sort of paranoia; rather, it is a crass, lowbrow, and primitive kind. The issue of the Treaty of Sèvres or the latest American and Israeli plot against our religion is the most popular example of this sort of paranoia. This type of reasoning is an obstacle for a balanced and rational thinking. (86)[141]

For Pamuk, this sort of paranoia and conspiracy thinking is as much related to the *art of creative thinking*, in which seemingly unrelated pieces are brought together, as to self-doubt and blame-shifting. The director of the Education Institute in *Snow,* for instance, before getting shot by the young Islamist assassin, says: "But has it never

[141] Ülkemizde paranoya kültürü olağanüstü zengindir, ama zeki paranoya değil, görgüsüz, kültürsüz, iptidai bir paranoya çeşididir bu. Sevr konusu, ya da dinimize karşı en son Amerikan-İsrail kumpası bunun en popüler şekilleridir ve bu tür mantık dengeli ve akılcı düşünceye engeldir.

occurred to you that foreign powers might be behind all this? Don't you see how they might have politicised the headscarf issue so that they can turn Turkey into a weak and divided nation?" (43-44). In the following bold remarks, as well, Pamuk shows the root of perpetual restlessness, paranoia culture and old political tradition of blame-shifting in Turkey:

> In that case [of paranoia], you always have shortcomings and of course, everyone else is busy with these shortcomings. This is a reason for social and political paranoia at the same time. Because it always has this sort of shortcoming—from inflation to torturing, from book bans to failing to enter the EU—Turkey is like a high school student who constantly gets alarmed, thinking that his pants are missing buttons, or that everyone is talking about him, mocking him and belittling him. (*Öteki Renkler* 87) [142]
>
> Turkey never asks "what is my fault, why cannot I fix my economy, why cannot I solve my human rights problems?" It is always external forces, always evil outsiders [...]. (*Öteki Renkler* 91)[143]

In *Snow,* this restlessness and paranoia-drenched political psyche is placed in the appropriately wretched microcosm of Kars, where political assassinations, suicide epidemics, disappearances, shootings, coups and curfews, dissident hunting, and daylight raids are common in everyday life. There are known plotters, double-agents, undercover policemen, intelligence agents, spies, and scoundrels everywhere, giving rise to what is perhaps an appropriately paranoid mind and psyche.[144] This *alaturca* setting deeply affects Pamuk's characters, constraining their logical faculties and reasoning to an ethical binary of good and evil. That is to say, paranoid thinking, or what I term "paranoid nationality disorder," cripples the Turkish political mind from seeing beyond the stark

[142] O zaman sürekli bir açığınız vardır ve elbette herkes de bununla meşguldür. Bu durum toplumsal ve siyasi paranoyanın sebeplerinden biridir de aynı zamanda. Türkiye'nin bu sürekli açığı, enflasyonundan işkenceye, kitap yasaklamaktan Avrupa Birliği'ne girememeye kadar pek çok açığı olduğu için sürekli pantolonumun düğmesi eksik, herkes benden bahsediyor, gene benimle alay edip küçümsüyorlar mı telaşlarına kapılır bir liseli öğrenci gibi.

[143] "Benim kusurum nedir, neden ekonomimi düzeltemiyorum, niçin insan hakları derdimi çözemiyorum" demiyor Türkiye. Hep dış mihraklar […].

[144] Pamuk's decision to set *Snow* over the span of three days shows how extremely hectic and dynamic the Turkish political context is, as well as how dizzyingly fast it moves and changes.

options of good and evil—all evil is attributed to the other and to whatever is radically different from the supposedly Islamic and Turkish essence. This is why in *Snow* every other person blames his or her ideological and political other, and everything together marks the West as the culprit.[145]

There is one exception to this rule, however: Ka's political thinking moves beyond good, evil and paranoia. In Ka's relatively "un-Turkic" frame of mind, moral and ideological regulations and norms transmute into superfluous prescriptions, and ethical binary is mostly treated as a pathetic national consolation. In fact, Pamuk's success as a true political storyteller may rest partly in putting a dangerous and morbid political context into the sharp relief of satire. What makes a reader shiver at times also stores a potential laughter. Following the master of grotesque juxtaposition of the uncanny and the comic in the political novel, *viz.*, Dostoevsky, Pamuk balances the dark side of Turkish politics with a comic relief that is built into or results from the aforementioned characteristics of Turkish society. Indeed, true to this Dostoevskian trust in *Snow*, as the atmosphere gets eerier, the characters, too, especially Ka, get comical, receiving their fair shares of ridicule, mockery, and satire.

At the social level, then, *Snow* reads as a novel about the complexity of Turkish politics, both in the specific context of the Islamist-secular conflict and in the larger context of Turkish modernisation and democratisation. Pamuk brings together all interlocutory parties, actors, and groups, showing that they in fact have more similarities than differences. Still, *Snow* accurately reveals that the real source of antagonism between the secularists and the Islamists is the claim to the same power and authority, illustrating how this power rivalry has turned Turkey into a conflict zone, crippling modernisation

[145] Though at this stage, since Islamists and the state have not been unified yet, Lacivert and some other Islamists blame the state, too.

and democratisation, and causing Turkish politics to become more and more abusive, misogynist, xenophobic, Western-phobic, undemocratic, ultra-nationalist, noxious, incorrigibly corrupt, and scandal spawning. In a way, *Snow* is a bold and honest portrayal of Turkish politics as a conflict-producing leviathan of all shapes and sizes: East-West, secularist-Islamist, Turkish-Kurdish, centre-periphery, state-dissident, Marxist secularist-statist secularist, Kurdish Islamists-Kurdish revolutionarists, and so forth. Conflicts spawn more conflicts.

In such picture, conflict appears as the ultimate essence and *modus operandi* of Turkish politics—and thus as much a strength as a weakness and failure. In a way, *Snow* reveals the true character of the Turkish political context as a perfect *"discordant concordance"* (derived from the doctrine of *concordia discors* of ancient philosophy, referring simply to the idea that the constant conflicts between the four main elements in nature—air, earth, fire and water—simultaneously create an overall harmony in the world). And this, I argue, is the ultimate accomplishment of *Snow*: Pamuk not only points out the source of conflict and its outcomes but also shows how and why it works, how the elements of the system complement one another and work in harmony all together. Thus, in many ways, of many ideologemes that are discerned in *Snow*'s exceptionally rich social context, it is the *discordant concordance* or the *cycle of conflict* that gains the most prominence.[146]

In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, later published under the title of *My Father's Suitcase*, Pamuk maintained that:

[146] In a coda to this already refined rendering, Pamuk creates a single core metaphor, snow, to deliver the whole socio-political message. Many scholars have raised this point in their studies: for Thomas Cartelli snow is "an explosive barrier of symbols" (149), Sibel Erol maintains that it is "the most poignant and economic symbol of *différence*," which "encapsulates difference and similarity in a relationship of continuity" (430). Göknar, too, identifies various symbolic meanings deposited in the symbolic use of snow in the fictional context (198).

> What literature needs most to tell and investigate today are humanity's basic fears: the fear of being left outside, and the fear of counting for nothing, and the feelings of worthlessness that come with such fears; the collective humiliations, vulnerabilities, slights, grievances, sensitivities, and imagined insults, and the nationalist boasts and inflations that are their next of kin… (*Other Colours* 413)

With these remarks, *Snow* finds its meaning at the second level. *Snow* is the story of people whom "a mocking devil inside" constantly reminds "that the world has a centre and it is far away from them," in Pamuk's fine expression (*Other Colours* 413). In this sense, *Snow'*s social meaning is the unsettling and ambivalent sense of provinciality, marginality, insufficiency, degradation and the fear of (un)authenticity that spring from such intellectual and psychological states, as well as how ideology and religion become both an antidote and primary cause for these. Let us now move to the last horizon in the model.

Snow stands in close dialogue with both Turkish and Russian literature. Apart from Republican novels that represent Kemalist and secularist *esprits* in the face of Islamic values, such as Reşat Nuri's *Yeşil Gece* (Green Night, 1928) and Yakup Kadri's *Yaban* (Alien, 1932), in which the idealist Turkish intellectual fights against the sources of backwardness, particularly religious radicalness, the novel also has subtle references to some representatives of Turkish-Islamist literature, including salvation novels. The most important of them is probably the allusion to Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1904-1983). Being an ex-Marxist, Kısakürek is one of the most prominent Islamist ideologues and poets in Turkey. True to his love for converts and *doppelgängers*, Pamuk creates two religious school students named Necip and Fazıl, who are not only close friends but can see and read through each other's mind, and even transmigrate into each other's body (metempsychosis). Necip and Fazıl always read *Büyük Doğu* magazine (Kısakürek's magazine and lifetime dedication) in the novel. As Burhanettin Duran points out, Islamism in Kısakürek has paralleled and doubled the Kemalist mentality that it originally

intended to challenge, particularly in its ultra-nationalist stance and social engineering that aimed at a top-down reformation (Duran 141). This is stated nowhere more evidently than Kısakürek's manifesto called "*Kurtuluş Davâsına Reçete*" (The Prescription for Salvation, November 21, 1980), which was published in the spirit of celebration of the 1980's military coup (because it has ended the advancement of communism and leftist movements, including Kurdish one). Here, showing an ultimate refinement of dreadfully fascist imagination, Kısakürek suggested that the state and police put a list of 20 rules, all horrifyingly misogynist, xenophobic, Western-phobic, and Turkish-Islamist supremacist, with immediate effect. From the re-imprisonment of women to the place that she belongs to, her house, to mass hanging of all dissidents, from shutting all parties, organisations, and unions down to complete state intervention and control of media, art, and publication, the list of suggestions shows how frighteningly damaged the Islamist-nationalist mind, ethics, psychology, and imagination is. From such perspective, the Necip Fazıl allusion in *Snow* stands as a subtext to the history of Islamist political thought [147]

Kadife's, then named Hicran's, story of religious enlightenment, giving up modelling and covering herself, on the other hand, is a reference to the popularity of the same spiritual and religious awakening of beautiful models in salvation novels (Halit Ertuğrul's *Kendini Arayan Kadın* [The Woman Who Seeks for Herself, 2004], *Aradığını Bulan Kadın* [The Women Who Finds Herself, 2004], and Emine Şenlikoğlu's *İmamın Manken Kızı* [The Imam's Model Daughter, 1997]). Still, *Snow*'s real subtexts are two of the finest examples of post-Kemalist parody in modern Turkish literature: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (*Time Regulation Institute*, serialised in 1954 and published as a book in 1961) and Oğuz Atay's *Tutunamayanlar* (Misfits, 1972). The latter's influence on *Snow*, as Göknar points out, is immense, most evident in "its doubled

[147] For the full list see Duran 131-33.

structure that 'reconstructs' a lost friend's life, its central absent text, and its metafictional techniques" (204).

Numerous more subtle references are registered in *Snow*. Two such subtexts in particular, less commonly noted yet important, present some substantial clues towards the interpretation of the text. The first is *The Charter of Medina* or the *Constitution of Medina,* which was a constitution formed by the Prophet Muhammad as a basis of a multi-religious Islamic state in Medina. The document aims to establish and maintain peace, cooperation and mutual cultural, ethnic, religious understanding between nine constituent tribes, including Jewish groups. The document ensured the freedom of religious beliefs and practices for all groups and implemented many other societal, cultural, and juridical regulations towards this specific end. The pact is viewed as a vital document for "understanding the foundation and the consolidation of the Muslim *ummah*" (Türkmen-Dervişoğlu 95). In *Snow*, Pamuk establishes Ka as a poet who receives transcendental communication, thus serving as a link between poetic and prophetic revelation. Like the Prophet Muhammad, Ka arrives in a city excessively shaken and agitated by conflicting ethno-national, religious, and ideological groups; he also attempts to bring the warring groups together for a joint declaration. But Pamuk's modern prophet is a comic hero, thus completing his majestic parody in *Snow*. Ka's point in organising the joint declaration is not to bring about peace but to be free to make love to İpek, carrying the whole reference to even a sharper level of mocking and parody.

The second subtext in *Snow*'s rich and multilayer literary context is *Faust*. This legend, which narrates the story of a German magician named Faust, who bargains his soul with the devil in exchange for knowledge, youth and power, explains the real reason for Ka's coming to Kars and for engaging in gravely dangerous political games with Islamist and secularist extremists. Note that, as a general trait, Pamuk's characters do not

pursue power or knowledge, all they ask in return is happiness. Because of his fear of exilic misery and despair, Ka strikes a Faustian bargain for happiness. *Snow*, in this sense, is ultimately summed up as a trading pact for happiness with the devil of politics.

All these references and subtexts, however, are dwarfed by *Snow*'s overwhelmingly comprehensive relation with Russian classics, and particularly Dostoevsky's great political novel *The Possessed* or *The Devils* (1871-1872). Andrew Wachtel's description of *The Devils* as "the first novel to grapple seriously with the psychology of terrorism, and a sustained meditation on belief, suicide and westernisation" (94), could be used *verbatim* for *Snow*. Indeed, after analysing *Snow* and its relation with classic Russian novels, Wachtel maintains that "*Snow* is a more 'Russian' novel than anything a contemporary author writing in Russian might be likely to produce" (105). Pamuk, himself, during an interview, stated that he had learned a lot from Dostoevsky, particularly in terms of struggling to reconcile Western ideals and values with his local and national identity, as well as in writing a polyphonic novel (Kahraman 164). The first point is a hallmark for Pamuk's complete writing career. The latter, that is writing a polyphonic novel, which is more important at this level of interpretation, is especially pertinent to *Snow*, where Pamuk's use of a different voice for each and every political stance and ideological view demonstrates his dedicated study of Dostoevsky's art. As Bakhtin points, Dostoevsky was "a great artist of the idea," an incomparable master of representing someone else's idea, while preserving his writerly distance from any of the ideas represented perfectly intact (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 85).

Through Dostoevsky, Pamuk also mastered what Bakhtin calls "hearing his epoch as a great dialogue" in which "not only individual voices, but precisely and predominantly the *dialogic relationship* among voices, their dialogic *interaction*" is audible (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 90). True to dialogism, Pamuk engages in a truth-seeking

process that courageously challenges the official monologic discourse and brings together all parties to speak to one another, quarrel and collide, since only through such dialogic interaction could the truth be found or born (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 110). In this sense, Pamuk, together with his narrator Orhan, his hero Ka, and his reader constitute a truth squad, or a group of Socratic "*midwives*" of the truth, as Bakhtin would call it (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 110). The novel thus turns into a birth of political truth from cross-examinations of individual and collective hearings. Here, Pamuk follows his Turkish (Tanpınar and Atay) masters' path, using literary devices and techniques like parody, metafictional setting, mockery, absurdity, and grotesqueness in pursuit of the truth.

Yet another instance of Dostoevsky's influence comes to the fore in these techniques. As Bakhtin points out in his examination of Dostoevskian dialogue, *menippean satire*, principle characteristics of which are scandal and eccentricity, is one of the hallmarks of this Russian master, particularly in presenting the truth (*Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 117). Pamuk, too, makes ample use of scandal (as in the scenes in the shows of the theatre company), eccentric behaviours and speech manners (like Lacivert's unsettlingly soft yet intimidating self-conduct, Zaim's real-life performances of Brechtian alienation, and Muhtar's political sadomasochism), and numerous other sordid and unsettling elements. In so doing, Pamuk not only brings the distinguishing qualities of the Turkish political scene into relief but also softens the terrorising and intimidating gravity of the issue through their comic relief effect. The appallingly accommodating Turkish context, no doubt, offers more than a writer could ask for in this kind of narrative material. Indeed, in the case of Turkish politics, the truth is at times

stranger than Pamuk's own fiction, as scandal and eccentricity are the bone and blood of politics in Turkey.[148]

Snow is truly a carnivalesque novel not simply for bringing all different groups in a half-real and half-staged microcosm that is grotesque, parodic, and debunked; but also because it creates a carnival of literary forms: a metafictional frame story, newspaper articles, a voice record of murder, interviews and interrogations, letters, Brechtian plays of *My Fatherland or My Headscarf* and *A Tragedy in Kars* (an adaptation of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*), missing poems, an encyclopaedia entry, a joint declaration, a notebook page, and so forth. Pamuk uses some of these towards specific ends, but in general, I argue, he employs such variety of forms and techniques to (i) further emphasize the carnivalesque, grotesque, and parodic nature of the political scene (the newspaper articles covering events before they happen, for instance), (ii) overcome the gravity and grimness of his story and make it more appealing (the hilarious flashback story of Sunay Zaim's auditioning for the role of Atatürk and the Kars' people's addiction to a Latin American melodrama, *Marianna*), (iii) create a fast-paced narrative that could reflect the dizzying dynamism of Turkish political scene (the play that turns into a staged military coup, *a coup de theatre*), (iv) serve as midwife and nurse to the complex and ambivalent truth about the Islamist and secularist conflict (the play *My Fatherland or My Headscarf* , the joint declaration to the West, and the secret meeting in Hotel Asia), and finally, at a higher and broader level, (v) engage with some more universal and general questions that

[148] As a reaction to Pamuk's bold statement during an interview with Swiss newspaper concerning the Armenian genocide and the mass killing of Kurds by the Turkish state, Mustafa Altınpınar, the local governor of the Sütçüler province of Isparta, ordered that each and every book by Pamuk be collected from provincial libraries and destroyed immediately. According to the newspapers (*Radikal* and *Bianet*, March 30, 2005) that carried this scandal to the national attention, "The whole province has been searched and no books by Pamuk have been found in any official library. Altınpınar stated that 'He wished he had conducted a preliminary research before issuing the order.'" As Doğan points out, it was as if the political parody that Pamuk told in *Snow* had come true (89).

have long become a Pamukian conceit, such as the blurring boundaries between reality and fiction, East and West, and politics and literature.

In a way, thanks to these manifold forms and diversified literary devices and techniques, Pamuk is able to present a world of interacting and colliding views and ideologies through literary forms and devices. For instance, Pamuk has poems present the Islamist essence through transcendent communication to Ka whenever and wherever his ontic and paranormal religio-mystical sentiments are agitated, while Zaim's profane, mundane, and top-down plays (*My Fatherland or My Headscarf* and *A Tragedy in Kars*) carry the adapted, unnatural, patronising, and radical essence of Republican secularisation and modernisation. He also illustrates the performance-bound nature of being a Muslim or a secular in Turkey: the whole country becoming a gigantic stage where Islamist and secularist actors perform their faiths and ideologies. In other words, it is not only that Islamists converse with secularists in *Snow*, but also poems speak to plays, plays speak back to life, articles summon poems, TV dramas leak into life. But in *Snow*, it is an absent text that marks the text's ultimate meaning in the final analysis of history. Because of this absent text, a transcendent communication that recurs throughout the novel, this novel about politics and religion, secularism and Islamism, reads as a text that reveals the very nature of the truth: absent yet everywhere present.

III. Conclusion: Same Bed, Different Dreams

Let us start with the Kurdish context. For the Kurds, the question of religion and politics, rather than a concern in itself, appears to be leverage to criticise Turkish-Islamist politics. Although Kurds and Kurdish Islamists have always been active in the conflict between religion and secularisation, and a majority of Kurdish society is designated as strongly religious, modern Kurdish fiction has not shown a corresponding interest in the

issue. The overwhelming dominance of the language question, non-distinctive roles and the place of religion in Kurdish national identity with regard to the Turkish national identity, along with the secular character of the Kurdish movement in Turkey appear as the main causes for this. Yet the Kurdish front is as diverse and complicated as the Turkish one, in terms of the politics of religion. In fact, Kurdish writers have all they need to create their own *Berf,* (Snow in Kurdish): an even worse performance in gender equality and women rights, radical Islamist groups that frame the Kurdish question with completely Islamic borders and understanding, a significantly large and stationary part of the population that opts for Turkish-Islamist political parties rather than revolutionary Kurdish nationalists, and an equally if not more schizophrenic society.

When we turn to the Turkish context, at the manifest level Pamuk's *Snow*, points out the constructive and reciprocal relationship between the state and Islam in Turkey; that is, he shows how the values, practices, and ideals of the majority religion, Sunni Islam, have substantially influenced the definition, role, and structure of the Turkish nation-state and *vice versa*. Here, the state stands for the overarching ideological currents, *viz.,* Kemalist, secularist, Republican, nationalist, Turkish supremacist, Sunni, Turkish-Islamist and so forth. What brings the two allegedly historically and politically antagonistic forces, secularism and Islamism, into close proximity is their absolute faith and devotion to authority, integrity, and domination, as well as their unquestionable rules and regulations. Thus, the long established binary between secularists and Islamists in Turkey, in this vein, is only an artificial polarisation. In other words, as Tapper and Tapper put it, "Turkish Islam and Turkish republicanism/nationalism…are both expressions of a single underlying ideology of social control" (Tapper and Tapper 72-73).

In *Snow*, this proximity unfolds through a story which in a microcosm of the Turkish political scene brings together Turkey's principal antagonistic poles, Islamist and

secularist conflict, to interact and reveal all their colours. Here, not only ideological and political positions but also literatures engage in a dialogue: salvation novels speak to Republican ones, headscarf diaries and testimonies answer back to secularist plays. While these sides are colliding in this destructive dialogue, Pamuk offers his reader the perfect lens of fiction, using parody, self-mockery, and satire to correct all ideological deflections. He reveals the limits of binarism and the fallacy of simple divisions like religious-secular, Islamist-statist, modernist-conservatist, and so forth by presenting the complexity of the issue. To deliver his manifest and latent messages, Pamuk chooses two interconnected issues: the women question (through the headscarf controversy and suicide epidemic) and the religious-secularist divide (through the rise of radical Islam and Islamist politics, as well as the state and Kemalists' reaction to it). Pamuk casts these questions in the larger socio-political and historical plane of Turkish modernisation and democracy, and as a complementary question that is intrinsically linked to all these, he adds the Kurdish conflict to the picture, too.

As Göle states "[a]lthough traditionalism, Islamism, reformism, and Westernism all changed and acquired new meanings through the course of time, the 'question of women' as the main point of divergence between them remained unchanged" (*The Forbidden Modern* 65). Given the centrality of the women question to Turkish modernisation and secularisation and its use as a litmus test between Islamists and secularists, *Snow*'s focus on the headscarf conflict and female suicide epidemic is thus exceptionally effective. The conflict-drenched political scene in *Snow* disintegrates into a complex net of rivalries for power, the protection of the *status quo*, overarching socio-political structures, and complementary psychological and intellectual anomalies.

Moving above this narrowly political and social level, *Snow* offers an extremely rich and incisive interpretation of all these conflicts and configurations. *Snow*'s ultimate

meaning at this level could be what Daryush Shayegan (1997) conceptualizes as *cultural schizophrenia*, *i.e.*, "the mental distortions afflicting those civilisations that have remained on the sidelines of history and played no part in the festival of changes;" (vii), the unsettling feeling of being unauthentic and "counting for nothing," and constant anxiety due to one's peripheral and provincial position. All metafictional games, the register of various genres, forms, and literary techniques are employed to deliver such a universal message.

In this sense, *Snow* helps us understand two subtle characteristics of Turkish tragedy, taking one's self too seriously and inevitable repetition. The former was Sartre's definition of tragedy, the latter Derrida's. Shayegan captures perfectly the first characteristic: "the point is not to make comparisons but to acquire a measure of humility and free ourselves from the crazed egocentrism that lets us believe the world begins and ends with Islam"—and Turks, in our case (29). The second characteristic is even subtler. There is no outside of repetition in Turkish tragedy (read: Turkish politics). Rather, Turkey turns itself back to a former stage; it is never performing, eternally rehearsing. Today, as of 2017, Turkey has no headscarf question. This is not because Turkish democracy, human rights and women movements won the case, but because an Islamist party has gradually taken power and a group of Islamist men who are the least pro-feminist and pro-gender equality granted themselves the right to have wives and daughters in headscarves in the public sphere. Merve Kavakçı now can take her oath in her headscarf in the Turkish parliament. If she wanted to do it in Kurdish, however, a new group of deputies, now Turkish-Islamists, would probably remind her that the parliament "is not the place to challenge the state!"

CHAPTER FOUR

TRYING TO AWAKE FROM THE NIGHTMARE THAT IS HISTORY: POLITICS OF HISTORY

In a captivating scene from a 2002 TV miniseries adaptation of *Doctor Zhivago*, Zhivago's medical professor, having found Zhivago's poetry book, says to his young assistant, "not only do you want to be a doctor, you want to be a voice of the people as well." To this hint at the classic personal-versus-collective quandary, Zhivago replies, "I will be a doctor for others and a poet for myself" (Campiotti, *Doctor Zhivago*). One can easily imagine a big group of Turkish and Kurdish writers shaking their heads disapprovingly, for they have always gone the other way around: being doctors for themselves and writers for others.

This chapter analyses two such writers, Kemal Tahir and Ereb Shemo, whose works prioritised the socio-political facet over aesthetic and artistic values and who were aware of "the pedagogical element" or "the humanist impulse to teach and educate" inherent in the historical novel (cited from György Lukács in De Groot 29). I selected Tahir for this analysis of the politics of history because he is not only one of the most prolific historical novel writers in Turkey, but also one of the most respected canonical writers in the Turkish literary institution. Furthermore, Tahir approached history to find the reasons and answers for profound socio-economic and political questions of Turkish society, using his historical novels as practical tools to share and teach his theoretical finding.

While Tahir stands out in the crowded field of Turkish literati, the Kurdish literary institution provides much more limited choice, thanks to its relatively short history, narrow scope, and various historical disadvantages. Here I opted for Shemo for three

reasons.[149] First, Shemo had a very similar ideological background and understanding of literature as did Tahir. Secondly, Shemo's *Dimdim* (Castle Dimdim, 1966) and Tahir's *Devlet Ana* (Mother State, 1967), as I discuss below, relate well to one another in terms of the thematics, intellectual concerns, and the purpose of writing. Thirdly, and especially pertinent for purposes of this thesis, as van Bruinessen pointed, Kurdish literature and culture of the northern Kurmanji bloomed at the intersection of three types of diaspora: Western Turkey, former Soviet Union, and Western Europe (cited in Reşît 212). Given Shemo's and Soviet Kurdish literature's foundational role and importance for the modern Kurdish literary institution, any analysis of Kurdish literature is incomplete without some mention of this diasporic branch of Kurmanji literature.[150]

The main aim of this chapter is to analyse *Devlet Ana* and *Dimdim* within the scope of the politics of history, which influenced both the production and interpretation of the two works. To this end, I will attend to the historical and political contexts of each story, the time in which they were written, and the historiography that shaped the

[149] The Armenian genocide has become a prominent theme in the Kurdish literary institution in the last few decades, leading to a new literary current of historical-cum-memorial fiction by a generation of young Kurdish authors. As studies such as Çelik (2015), Çelik and Öpengin (2016), and Galip (2016) demonstrate, these new stories and novels focus on memories of the shared Armenian and Kurdish pasts, the devastating impacts of the Armenian genocide, the narratives of catastrophe, and the criminal and moral culpability of the Kurds (Çelik and Öpengin 2; Galip 459; Çelik 28). I had initially considered Yavuz Ekinci's *Cennetin Kayıp Toprakları* (2012), one of the most accomplished representatives of this current and a novel written in Turkish by a Kurdish author, for its analysis of the politics of history. Neither Ekinci nor other Kurdish novelists who addressed the same issue, however, ultimately proved as suitable as Shemo for a comparison with Tahir. Shemo's fiction—along with Soviet Kurmanji literature more generally—is a perfect exemplary of historical-cum-memorial narratives of catastrophe and a forerunner of the abovementioned current of Kurdish literature, showcasing, as it does, the immense importance of memory, orality, undocumented history, the narrative of collective misery and catastrophe, and self-examination of past wrong deeds. This is why I ultimately opted for Shemo. I should also point out that Turkish authors' treatments of the Armenian genocide, as also noted by Çelik and Öpengin, are generally determined by an official ideology of denialism and blame-shifting. I addressed this outlook in the chapter on the politics of love through Karakurt's novel; thus, comparing Tahir and Shemo, appeared even more favourable.

[150] It is also important to note that, true to my analytical and interpretive model, I analyse *Dimdim* in the Kurdish literary institution in Turkey and diaspora as well as its *context* (the totality of text, context, and subtext). Thus, my reading of *Dimdim* in such context will not be different from reading a Kurmanji novel written in Swedish diaspora.

understanding of history in these texts. Throughout the chapter, I rely on Hayden White's idea of history as "a narrative discourse, the content of which is as much imagined/invented as found" (Jenkins, *On 'What is History?'* 134). Thus, my analyses of the texts intend to reveal the narrative discourses and the political and ideological forces that brought about such discourses. Let us start with *Devlet Ana*.

I. Power in History and History as Power: Kemal Tahir's *Devlet Ana*

Kemal Tahir, the pen name of the Turkish writer İsmail Kemalettin Demir, was born in Istanbul in 1910 into a family that was connected to the ruling family of the empire. His father served as an *aide-de-camp* [*hünkâr yaveri*] to Sultan Abdulhamid II, and his mother worked in the service of Abdulhamid II's daughter Naile Sultan, (Berksoy 24). In fact, the very house in which Tahir was born was a gift to his family from Abdülhamid II. According to Sezai Coşkun, who has published one of the most extensive studies on Tahir, the Ottoman Palace had a strong influence on his family as well as decisive impacts on Tahir's thinking and literary career. For instance, he developed a sense of nostalgia to the great Ottoman times and a corresponding disquiet about the present time, never feeling quite at home and never having a sense of belonging in his own time (Coşkun 26-27). Beyond this, as Coşkun explains, Tahir had the sense that the existing political setting is always rooted in backgrounds that are different from those they appear to be in, that is, there is always some underhand dealings at work. "It is the effect of what he heard from his father regarding Abdülhamid II's period and Abdülhamid II's dethronement that Kemal Tahir often arrives at some conclusions that are reminiscent of conspiracy theories while interpreting political incidents" (27). Coinciding with the fall of the empire, the child Tahir witnessed many tragic moments and struggles marked by defeat, desperation, violence, and instability. Coşkun states that "it is the effect of his

childhood experiences on him that Tahir maintained a strictly statist position throughout his life" (27).

In 1923, when the new Republic was established, Tahir began his studies at Galatasaray High School, where he became interested in literature, learned French, and had the opportunity to read Western classics, including Balzac, whom he considered his "literary master" (Coşkun 31-33). Tahir's Galatasaray years abruptly ended when his mother died of tuberculosis in 1926 and his father, Tahir Bey, remarried. Deciding not to continue his education, he worked first as a lawyer's clerk, then as a warehouse official before settling on journalism in the beginning of the 1930s (Coşkun 33). Although he left journalism in 1939, in a sense he remained a journalist all his life.[151]

During his early years as a journalist, Tahir also began publishing poetry in the magazine *İçtihat* (Reformations, 1931). Being "a fanatic devotee of the Republic," and Republican revolutions, Tahir, followed a romantically fanatic Kemalist line during this period. According to a letter to Fatma İrfan, his first wife, he kept a photograph of Atatürk in his chest pocket for strength during the difficulties of life (Coşkun 51). In 1933 he started to publish his own magazine, *Geçit* (The Passage, 7 issues) with the intention of protecting and serving the Republic in a better and firmer way (Coşkun 39). During this time, with the help of some friends, he found a steadier job in a law office as a clerk and made enough money to enjoy lively nights of Beyoğlu (a nightlife hub in Istanbul), carousing, womanising, and leading a completely bohemian life (Coşkun 37).

While working as a clerk, he stayed in a lodging-house where, through his neighbour Mustafa Börüküce (known also as *Sarı Mustafa*, an important pioneer of

[151] It is possible to trace these early periods of his life in one of his characters, Murat, who appears in many novels, but particularly in *Hür Şehrin İnsanları* (People of the Free City, written in 1949, published posthumously in 1976) and *Bir Mülkiyet Kalesi* (A Fortress of Possession, 1977) (Coşkun 34).

socialist thinking in Turkey), he met two other important socialist ideologues of the time Nazım Hikmet and Kerim Sadi (Coşkun 46). This would prove a turning point in Tahir's life, after which he left his bohemian life and restarted to write poems. Influenced by Hikmet, these poems reflected a socialist-realist outlook, focusing on justice and struggle (Coşkun 51). In 1938, Tahir was accused of spreading sedition and making communist propaganda among Navy forces.[152] In what is known as the Navy Case [*Bahriye Davası*], Tahir was sentenced to a total of 15 years in prison. He was subsequently joined by his brother Nuri Tahir, Nazım Hikmet and other important figures from the same socialist network. Tahir spent almost 13 years, from 1938 to 1950, in different prisons of Anatolia, where he not only turned into a "sharp Marxist" (Erverdi 25) but also became a well-known literary figure. Throughout difficult years in prison, Tahir's main source of support and comfort had been Nazım Hikmet, though the two would later part ways over a dispute. Nazım Hikmet nonetheless inspired Tahir significantly in the early years of his writing career—so much so that when he gave up writing poems after 1936, he claimed it was impossible to exceed Nazım Hikmet's poetry (Coşkun 51).

While in prison, Tahir wrote many adventure-cum-love and detective stories and novels, including *Ödeşmek* (To Revenge), *Sevmek Hakkı* (Right to Love), and *Gönül Denen Hayvan* (Heart Is an Animal). In total he serialised 14 novels and novellas under various pseudonyms between 1946 and 1951 (Samsakçı 463). Upon his release by a general amnesty after approximately 13 years in prison, he continued to work for various magazines as translator and editor to support himself financially. He was also commissioned to write a follow-up series on the immensely popular *Mayk Hammer* by American author Mickey Spillane; in 8 months he wrote four original *Mayk Hammer*

[152] In fact, the whole issue was caused by Tahir's brother, Nuri Tahir, who was a naval officer at the time. Nuri Tahir took books by Sabahattin Ali and Nazım Hikmet from Kemal Tahir's personal library and smuggled them into navy forces.

novels (Samsakçı 464). Tahir continued to write or translate popular detective stories and thriller novels as late as 1958, though he always opted to publish them under various pseudonyms, finding these writings shameful (Samsakçı 464).

Reaching the prime of his writing career after the 1960s, Tahir wrote more than 30 novels and story collections, though some of them were published posthumously. In addition to these, he also left a 15-volume collection of notes and many letters. Tahir won the Yunus Nadi Novel Prize [*Yunus Nadi Roman Ödülü*, a very prestigious novel prize in Turkey] for the best novel of 1967-1968 with *Yorgun Savaşçı* (The Tired Warrior), and the 1968 Turkish Language Institution Novel Prize [*TDK Roman Ödülü*] for *Devlet Ana*. After a battle with lung cancer in the 1970s, he returned to his writings, taking voluminous notes for new novels and working more enthusiastically than ever. His heart, however, failed him after a heated debate in a friend's house, and he died on April 21, 1973.

Tahir remains a very controversial writer. There are two camps in the Turkish literary institution with respect to Tahir, one exalting him as the inventor of the Turkish novel, the other harshly critical of him and his work. The former consists of friends and followers of Tahir who had never flinched from promoting Tahir's works, *e.g.*, Halit Refiğ (1934-2009) and Baykan Sezer (1939-2002). According to Refiğ, for example, what Einstein had done in physics, Tahir had done in literary and intellectual world (Gökçek 391). For this camp, with his downright honesty and bravery, Tahir committed an intellectual and political suicide with his novels, always speaking the inconvenient and painful truth. [153] The second camp consisted mostly of Marxist critics and scholars, Murat Belge (b.1943) and Fethi Naci (1927-2008), being the most prominent.

[153] Fatih Çalmaz, another admirer of Tahir's intellectual bravery, summarizes this point in the following passage: "Kemal Tahir is the man whose flesh was bitten by every ideological faction. […] For some feminists he is a patriarchist, for lefty liberals a nationalist-statist-fascist, for pure Marxists (in theory) a deviant, for Islamists a heathen, for novelists 'an ideologue who has treaded his art underfoot by his ideas,'

Tahir entered the Turkish literary institution through serialised stories which later came out as a collection of four long stories under the title of *Göl İnsanları* (People of the Lake, serialised in 1941, published as a book in 1955). This marked a tremendous critical success in Tahir's writing career (Coşkun 64).[154] These stories mainly focus on the dire living and working conditions in Anatolia and the decisive impact of human nature and culture on the lives and destinies of Anatolian villagers. In these first stories, Tahir is more descriptive than didactic, less of an ideologue than in his later years. *Göl İnsanları* was followed by another literary success, his first novel *Sağırdere* (The Deaf Brook, 1955) and its sequel *Körduman* (The Blind Smoke, 1957). In these novels, Tahir elaborates on economic and social problems faced by Anatolian villagers, *viz.*, the declining rural economy and its outcomes: domestic migration from villages to cities and subsequent culture shocks.

The time spent in Çorum prison was highly influential for Tahir's writing career. One of his signature trait in his novels is overtly chatty characters endowed with excessively theatrical speech and animated Anatolian accents; this is an imprint of these prison years. He also collected numerous stories of rural people and of criminals in prison, which later became the main content material for his novels. His novels that are set in Çorum include *Rahmet Yolları Kesti* (The Rain Blocked the Roads, 1957) and the *Çorum* trilogy*: Yediçınar Yaylası* (The Highland of *Yediçınar*, 1958), *Köyün Kamburu* (Hunchback of the Village, 1959), and *Büyük Mal* (The Big Deal, 1970). Narrating the social history of Anatolia in the last century, this trilogy is an investigation into the historical identity that gives Anatolian people their essential characteristics (Coşkun 73).

for some sociologists 'a desperate Easterner whose invocation is destined to end up in the issue of East and West,' [...] and for some an aversive. His unfortunateness is being an intellectual in this country" (196).

[154] Tahir's first publication was a booklet, *Namık Kemal İçin Diyorlar ki* (What They Said on Namık Kemal, 1936), a literary survey done by Tahir on Namık Kemal (Özsoy 6). For further reading on Tahir's first publications see Özsoy 4-6.

In doing this, Tahir focused on property relations and the economic configuration of power in Anatolia.

In 1957, Tahir wrote *Rahmet Yolları Kesti* as a response to Yaşar Kemal's *İnce Memed* (Memed, My Hawk, 1955), which he had found misleading and not representative of reality. In Yaşar Kemal's novel, a poor village boy named Memed becomes a beloved and highly respected legendary bandit among locals, fighting against the oppressive and unjust local and official authorities. Tahir's opposition to Memed, who resists and challenges the local authorities as a positive hero, was perhaps due to his confidence in state power and its unquestionable authority—not to mention his propensity for controversy. Another novel, *Bozkırdaki Çekirdek* (The Seed in the Steppe, 1967) particularly notable for the disturbance it caused within Republican circles, explores one of the most disputed initiations of single-party regime in Turkey, Village Institutions [*Köy Enstitüleri*],[155] and demonstrates its pitfalls and failures through the eyes of villagers with a tragic plot and ending.

For all their success, however, Tahir's village novels and stories have always remained in the shadow of his historical novels, which dominated the Turkish literary institution both sensationally and intellectually throughout the 1950s and the 1960s. Tahir began working on these novels as early as in the 1940s while in Çorum prison, reading all available resources on the Ottoman history and historiography, and taking detailed notes from *Evliya Çelebi*, *Naima*, and *Peçevi*, some of the most pivotal primary resources

[155] Village Institutes was an initiation of public schooling for village students in Turkey between 1940 and 1954. The primary operational rules for these institutes could be listed as follows: (i) students were selected among the most successful students in the villages, (ii) villagers and students were to build all the school buildings and to farm their own food, (iii) the education included both practical (*i.e.*, agriculture, construction, arts and crafts) and classical (mathematics, science, literature, and history) courses, and (iv) the students had to return and set primary schools in their own villages following the graduation.

on the Ottoman history. When he was released from prison in 1950, there were 4000 pages notes on the Ottoman history in his luggage (Coşkun 80).

Tahir's first historical novel ever published was the first book of *Esir Şehir Üçlemesi* (The Captive City Trilogy), *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* (People of the Captive City, first serialised in *Yeni İstanbul* newspaper in 1953, later published as a book in 1956). The second book of the trilogy, *Esir Şehrin Mahpusu* (Prisoner of the Captive City, 1962) was published six years later, followed by the last volume, *Yol Ayrımı* (Parting of the Ways, 1971). As suggested by the titles, the first two books were set in Istanbul when the city was under the Allied occupation (November 13, 1918-September 23, 1923). Having chosen Kâmil Bey, a member of the late Ottoman aristocracy and an important bureaucrat of the Abdülhamit II period, as his tragic hero, Tahir explores the Turkish transition from empire to nation-state. As Coşkun states, during 18 years between the first and last books of the *Esir Şehir* trilogy, Tahir's opinions changed dramatically, which had an impact on the whole trilogy and stirred unease within the Turkish literary institution (Coşkun 272). Many critics found Tahir's modifications to his hero scandalous and were perplexed by the general political attitude of the novel, which had become less sympathetic to the Kemalist cadre and more critical of Kemalist revolutions.

Another historical novel, *Yorgun Savaşçı* (The Tired Warrier, 1965), tells the story of *Ittihat* cadre during the National Struggle.[156] The *Ittihat* cadre, known as *İttihatçılar*, was held responsible for entering the First World War, which turned out to be the end of the empire. Tahir's portrayal of some members of the group as heroic fighters and supporters of the Turkish National Struggle [*Milli Mücadale*] in a documentary-like

[156] *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, the Committee of Union and Progress, later Party of Union and Progress, which emerged as an important political organisation after the Second Constitution in 1908, dominated late Ottoman-Turkish politics until 1918, when it was dissolved.

setting, revealing hidden facts about the cadre, caused still more unease among Turkish intellectuals.[157]

Raising the level of controversy yet further, *Kurt Kanunu* (The Law of the Wolves, 1969) focused on the purge of members of the old *Ittihat* group who had begun to resent Atatürk and the Republican cadre, even plotting an assassination attempt on Atatürk in İzmir. Once again basing his story on a true event in political history, Tahir presented his own interpretation of the incident, with the driving motives and specific political context that lead to a divorce between *Kemalist* and *Ittihat* cadres. Tahir's positive portrayal of members of the latter, like the hero Kara Kemal, a wise patriot whose life-long struggle and purpose had always been the well-being of his country, as well as his overtly biased coverage of the incident, once again agitated the Turkish literary institution.

Considered overall, we can discern two dominant strands in Tahir's writing: first, a man or society caught in drama and second, various types of antagonism. As Berna Moran, a leading critic of the Turkish literary institution, points out, what differentiates Tahir from other authors who wrote about Anatolia and villages, especially those with a Village Institute background, is his formulaic character-type that is called "*drama düşmüş insan*" [although difficult to translate, this roughly means a tragic hero who caught in a drama], which lies at the very heart of his understanding of the novel (Moran 176). Tahir defines this formula as follows: "My understanding of the novel is based on a single individual who got caught in drama, in the historical development of the society [he lives in]." He continues further on: "A human drama is possible only when a person finds

[157] Tahir explains his sympathy for the group as follows: "Muslim *Ittihat* group [*Müslüman İttihatçılar*], though they brought the country to ruin through negotiating with and entrusting it to Germans blindly, was the last Asian-Ottoman cadre who knew how to rise against Western-Christian imperialism at the risk of giving their own lives for this cause" (*Notlar/Batılılaşma* 55).

himself cornered and has no way out. Being cornered and trapped, here, as I see, is not caused by external forces but by traits of personality (*Notlar 1/ Sanat Edebiyat* 70).

In another place, however, Tahir refers to his formula as "the drama of individual in the grip of society," as seen in his novels *Sağırdere, Körduman,* and *Kelleci Mehmet* (Mehmet, the Headhunter 1962). He identifies his hero as someone who cannot overcome something that others easily do, because of his own personal traits and external factors (Coşkun 170). As Moran points out, in order to reconcile this formula with the drama of society, or collective drama, an idea that runs deep in Tahir's writings, Tahir amends his formula, arguing that the drama of a human being is personal but not because of his disposition; rather, it is personal because he is ultimately a part of the collective (176).

One should note that contradiction is a very common phenomenon in Tahir's thinking, and Moran is quite right in pointing out Tahir's nebulous outlook on the issue. Tahir claimed that due to distinctive social and historical developments, Turkish people are different from Western people. So, too, then, should be the Turkish novel. For it is a product of class struggles and the loneliness of the individual in society; as such, the dramas of Western novels would not apply to Turkish people (Moran 177). In light of this, Tahir believed, a Turkish writer can only create a truly Turkish novel by presenting the collective drama rather than a personal one. All these arguments notwithstanding, Tahir also argued that in the context of the East or of Anatolia, the personal and collective forms of drama have been ineluctably intertwined and cannot be detached. This explanation, however, does not resolve the problems of Tahir's formulaic character-type, *viz.,* "*drama düşmüş insan,*" which was claimed (by Tahir and his adherents and sympathisers) to be a genuine formula to create an authentically Turkish novel. The whole issue seems to be an epitome of *Tahiresque* speculation and polemical authorship, since, in fact, there was really nothing new or authentic about Tahir's formula, because as Moran

writes, "the presence of a leading individual in a novel, does not necessarily require a personal drama detached from the collective drama. On the contrary, it enables the historical forces that bring about the collective drama to materialise more solidly" (180-81). Besides, already at the end of the 18th century, Sir Walter Scott took the same path and started the historical novel genre in Europe in a classical sense.

> As Georg Lukács states, in his works in which he focuses on critical transitional stages of England, Scott chooses an ordinary man from this particular period as his main hero so to display important social transitions in question. This hero, caught between conflicting historical forces of social transformation, cannot decide which side to take. In other words, this internal struggle (you can call it the individual drama if you wish) we witness, reflects the struggle of the social forces that he finds himself in. (Moran 180-81)

The other strand that runs through all Tahir's novels is a transgressive antagonism towards religion, women, and the West. His antagonism towards religion, which is the least salient of the three, is nevertheless consistent and pronounced. In one scene, in *Esir Şehrin İnsanları,* the hero Kâmil Bey, while fishing around for something valuable in a case of old documents and property deeds he inherited, the narrator registers the following passage concerning his thoughts:

> Kâmil Bey had taken with a strange sadness as he browsed around this jumble of old papers. Old people had been striving to adjust all of their conduct according to religion. Is there anything more pathetic than conforming a progressing and changing life to frozen [fixed] moulds? […] Here they are, every document, every *farman*, every verdict of *kadı* courts, all full of sharia tricks to abuse religion, in many different ways, for feathering their own nests […] It struck Kâmil Bey as a very disgraceful business to strive for his bread and butter through embracing this trick with its turbaned head and Qur'anic language. He stopped browsing this inherited jumble when he had taken by this feeling. (103-4)[158]

[158] Kâmil Bey, bu eski kâğıtları karıştırdıkça bir garip kedere kapıldı. Eski adamlar, bütün davranışlarını dine uydurmaya uğraşmışlardı. Yürüyen ve değişen hayatı donmuş kalıplara uydurmaya çalışmaktan daha zavallı bir iş olur mu? […] İşte her vesika, her ferman, her kadı mahkemesi hükmü, dini, başka başka kazançlara alet edebilmek için, akıl almaz şeriat hileleriyle dolu. […] Bu başı sarıklı, dili Kuran'lı dalavereye sarılarak ekmek parası çıkarmaya uğraşmak Kâmil Bey'e pek ayıp bir iş gibi geldi. Bu duyguya kapılınca dedelerinden kalma kâğıtları karıştırmaktan vazgeçti.

In Tahir's outlook, then, religion is a trick and a deceit with which people of power fill their purses and manipulate the masses. Hindering progress, fostering superstition, and causing moral corruption, religion is the primary reason for backwardness.

This anti-religion bias might not strike one as surprising giving his allegedly Marxist vision and general frame of mind. Coşkun, however, finds this remarkable nevertheless, given Tahir's strong anti-Republican proclivities; as he points out, "on almost every subject dealt with in his works he has adopted a different attitude from other [Turkish Republican era] writers"; as such, "it is striking that he is in tune with them concerning the subject of religion" (42). This approach is dramatically in conflict with Tahir's Turkish-nationalist and *Anatolianist* frame of mind and political standing. In this vein, Ali Emre's criticism of Tahir, which is a rare example of boldly critical approach to Tahir, as forming an "*Anatolianism* without Islam" [*İslâmsız Anadoluculuk*] (94) is very fitting and incisive.[159] Still, and notwithstanding such criticism, his popularity, especially in Islamist-nationalist circles, remains largely undiminished.

The second type of antagonism, that of towards women, is always coupled with egregious abuses of female sexuality and gives rise to hideous and irritating impulses. Of the hundreds of women depicted in his novels, none of them is deemed worthy of respect and positive treatment unless she accepts the dogmatic superiority of men and lives by this law. Tahir insults women who do not abide by this law in every possible way. In one point in *Esir Şehrin İnsanları*, while contemplating why his aristocratic wife shows no compassion or any interest in the national struggle (and comparing her with two other

[159] Another point of critique concerning Tahir's portrayal of Anatolian history is his systemic silence on state violence and cruelty towards Kurds and other religious and ethnic minorities. İsmail Beşikçi makes this point well in his appropriately entitled article "Kemal Tahir'in Yazmadıkları…" (What Kemal Tahir Did Not Write; 106). In defence of Tahir, one could always point to the fact that no intellectual, Turkish or Kurdish, dared to write about these issues in his own era. I argue, however, that Tahir's silence was rather due to his adherence to the state authority.

women, Nedime Hanım and Çerkez Dadı, who have devoted their lives to this struggle), Kâmil Bey finally finds the answer that unburdens his heart: "It was Ihsan [the husband], who has whipped Nedime into shape. And it was her machinist son who did the same to Çerkez Dadı. That is to say, they [the husband and the son] told them [the wife and the mother], striving day and night and with a simple, understandable language, relentlessly and with no anger or offence" (274).[160] Tahir uses the exact Turkish verb "*adam etmek*," which means "to make a man out of someone" in a sense that is closer to the meaning of "civilising someone." Note the precise equivalency Tahir establishes between men, power, and civilisation. One way or the other, for Tahir, women could only be oriented to reason, high values, and abstract notions through the labour of their men.[161]

This point, however, is often ignored or seen of minor importance in Tahir's novels. Coşkun, for example, writes that while Tahir's works provide a great deal of material for feminist critique, due to the limits of his work he could not expand on this point—although with more than 600 pages his work is meant to be all-encompassing (189). Coşkun's poor excuse turns into a whitewash when he asserts that Tahir was only trying to attract attention to the problem of objectification of women as sexual objects (193). But anyone who has read even one novel by Tahir can see that he never hesitated to lecture his readers in a blatantly patronising way. Yet even if he made an exception in this case and really did mean only to call attention to the plight of women, it is difficult to square his deeply misogynistic novels with his Turkish nationalism. Tahir devoted his

[160] Nedime'yi İhsan adam etmişti. Çerkez dadıyı da makinist oğlu… Yani onlarla gece gündüz anlayacağı dilde uğraşmışlar, bıkmadan, usanmadan, kızıp darılmadan söylemişlerdi.

[161] This notion has probably put most pertinently in a letter Tahir wrote to Fatma İrfan, then his fiancée. "Do not defy nature; a woman always needs a man. […] living without needing a man is caused either by sickness, abnormal feelings or dogmatic denying of life and its needs. The former is a terrible illness and the latter is a great foolishness. The woman who does not accept the protection [of man] is such a toy that you will find her definition in my dictionary as dirt. Those sisters of yours, who have to sell their flesh, be sure of it, have been rolling [in the dirt] because of these abnormal thoughts" (*Kemal Tahir'den* 22-23). These words hardly need any further interpretation; Tahir is a demonstrable misogynist.

entire oeuvre to prove the moral superiority of the Turks over the West, yet his novels are filled with perverts, pimps, rapists, paedophiles, abusers, prostitutes, adulterers, and so forth. If this is the way Turkish society is, one wonders what is so superior about this society. With its characters scoring so exceedingly poor at ethical conduct, there seems to be no firm footing left for Tahir's nationalistic project. But let us stop here and continue with the last and vastest type of antagonism in Tahir.

If nothing else, Tahir succeeded in expressing his deep-seated hatred for the West. This hatred extends to a degree which could be properly called as *Western-phobia*, filling his writings with frenzied attacks at whatever stands for the West. As with his other antagonisms, however, Tahir's Western-phobia is full of ambiguities and contradictions. This is not without historical precedence; indeed, this ambiguous phobia is a very strong political current in Turkey. Running very strong to this day in Turkish intellectual thought, whether Kemalist, Marxist, or Islamist, this phobia involves repulsion, hatred, enmity, and inferiority complex on the one hand, and desire, admiration, mimicry, a desperate need for approval, and superiority complex on the other. Although in conventional literary criticism Tahir's Western-phobia is seen as an opposition to superficial Westernisation, as Moran points out, "Kemal Tahir is not only against awry or superficial Westernisation, he is against Westernisation in its totality. The conversion of this from a reaction to a hatred towards Western civilisation goes hand in hand with the idealisation of the Ottomanism" (174). This, indeed, proves to be the case in many moments in his various writings. In a volume of his notes, published posthumously under the title of *Notlar/Batılaşma* (Notes/Becoming West, 1992),[162] he maintains that "The

[162] Reading Tahir's notes is quite an undertaking for any reader because of the lack of a contextual binding or guiding structure, as well as general disarray and constant repetitions. Moran also complains about this unsystematic and unhelpful editing of the volumes of *Notes* (175).

West, which has plundered people, […], dared to accuse the Ottomans, who had established one of the most humane systems in the world and was struggling to keep it going even after losing power, of being plunderers. It has succeeded in this surprisingly easily" (167-68).

Page after page, throughout both his fiction and non-fiction, Tahir highlights the same reasons for not succeeding in Westernisation and falling behind the Western civilisation: the plots of Western imperial-colonialist powers, the failure of the Turkish Westernisers in understanding the true nature of Westernisation,[163] the lack of a bourgeoisie in the Western sense,[164] a different system of landownership and production, and so forth. In fact, after reading a few volumes of Tahir's notes, a sensitive mind could easily suspect that he/she is reading an obsessive-paranoid man's diary rather than a writer's research notes for his novels. Compare the following examples taken from three different volumes of notes, note that the whole collection of notes is full of such obsessive, antagonistic, and recurring generalisations:

(I) Being Western means exploiting the world. No matter how embellished, Westernisation means only exploitation. To catch up and surpass Western civilisation means to become a more merciless exploiter than the West and Westerners. (*Notlar 7: Roman Notları I-Topal Kasırga* 20).

(II) What is meant by surpassing Western civilisation, in fact, is becoming more morally corrupt robbers, more contemptible enemies of humanity than Westerners are (*Notlar 10: Osmanlılık/Bizans* 469).

[163] In fact, Tahir argues that all kinds of reactionaryism are the products of Westernisation. According to him, the fanaticism and reactionism that haunt the country every now and then "should be seen as the direct outcome of the misleading sense of Westernisation and the path that is taken according to this fault, ergo directly misdoing of the Westernised people, *viz.*, agents of imperialists, who knowingly or unknowingly have fostered and empowered these [reactionary] movements with this very attitude" (*Notlar/Batılılaşma* 49).

[164] The recurrent emphasis on the lack of a Turkish bourgeois in the Western sense is another *Tahiresque* cliché. To him, the bourgeoisies we have in Turkey "are the ones that call for the state (to swindle it) whenever they end in a tight corner. When relaxed, however, they would never invest their gain in manufacturing, and even worse they would smuggle it out of the country" (*Notlar/Batılılaşma* 33).

(III) True Westernisation is a call for colonialisation. The Ottomans never headed for true Westernisation; today, we have not turned to it, either (*Notlar/Batılılaşma* 16).

In summary, without fail, Tahir's every novel is framed and coloured by the following formula and ingredients: (i) a man/society/nation caught in drama or trapped into a dead corner, (ii) the interspersing of *sine qua non* topics from the sacred catalogue of *Tahiresque* political history[165] through unnatural and forced narrative manoeuvres, (iii) an overarchingly misogynist, androcentric, and patriarchist discourse aimed at revealing the untrustworthy, immoral and promiscuous nature of the female in every opportunity (put simply, men conduct themselves with their guns and ideas, women with their sexuality), (iv) an amalgamated language between the contemporary Çorum dialect and old Anatolian Turkish, always spoken in inverted sentences in a manner that is manfully threatening but sweet-tempered, saucy and flirtatious but without any distinction between class, age or period,[166] and (v) insertion of all these into a historical period with a crime-thriller or detective story plotline.

We turn now to our main text, *Devlet Ana*, a voluminous 650-page novel set in the 13th-century-midwestern Anatolia. The Ottoman tribe, in Tahir's novel, has managed to establish an administrative order based on equality, justice, and peace in the *Söğüt* frontier, until the morally corrupt Western evildoer, Notüs Gladyüs, and his joint offenders, Uranha, a Turcopole, arrive at the frontier and stir up troubles. They first kill Demircan, Kerim's brother and Bacıbey's (aka Devlet Hatun/Devlet Ana, Kerim and

[165] Topics include the incompatible values of Ottomans and Turks, the evil of the West and Westernisation, imperialist-colonialist plans of Western powers, cruel feudalist and later capitalist systems in the West and its corresponding just, humane, sublime and gracious state [*kerim devlet*] in the East, the lack of a Turkish bourgeois, Asiatic mode of production (hereafter AMP), reasons for belated industrialism in the Eastern civilisations, and so forth. For a list of the main topics, arguments and ideas in Tahir, see Coşkun 167-68.

[166] From Kâmil Bey, an Ottoman aristocrat in *Esir Şehir* trilogy, to Murat, a young journalist in the 1920s in *Kurt Kanunu,* to a simple villager of the 13th century in *Devlet Ana* or an illiterate bandit from the 20th century in *Rahmet Yolları Kesti*, all of Tahir's characters speak the same language and have identical speech manners.

Demircan's mother who is the head of women army of the tribe) son, then rape his girlfriend Liya, who is Mavro's sister, and kill her, too. Upon receiving the tragic news, Bacıbey orders his younger son Kerim Çelebi to arm himself and take his brother's revenge. Already prepared to start his study under Sheikh Edabali's supervision, Kerim first rejects his mother's order but obey eventually. Killing, raping, stealing and conspiring against the Ottomans, Notüs Gladyüs and some other enemies of the Ottomans lay traps for Osman Beg, but with the help of his loyal friends, Christians and Armenians, Osman Beg always learns out about the traps and conspiracies in time to organise secret counterattacks. Fighting their enemies in a series of clashes and winning victories in all of them, the Ottomans conquer their enemies' lands and become a rising power in the region. Kerim and Mavro, too, achieve their mutual aim, killing Notüs Gladyüs and Uranha and avenging their brother and sister.

Before moving to the Jamesonian analysis of *Devlet Ana*, it is important to understand the context of the historiography on the "question of the rise of the Ottomans," as the novel offers its own particular resolution to the question. Talât Sait Halman's remarks on the novel are instructive in this regard:

> An awakening of interest in Ottoman history, after several decades of lamentable neglect of this vast untapped source for fiction, gave rise to a massive semidocumentary work by Kemal Tahir, […] his 1967 novel *Devlet Ana* (Mother State), praised by some as a masterwork and denounced by others as a bore, was certainly the most controversial piece in the one-hundred-year history of the Turkish novel. (*Rapture and Revolution* 89)

Indeed, it was perfectly fitting for Tahir to write such a novel, since incendiary controversy had always been his primary literary strategy. According to Naci, Tahir, rather than basing his novels on people, based them on information about the social and historical reality, viewing people as mere commentators who convey this information to readers; this is why Tahir's novels are appropriately called "peopleless novels" [*insansız*

romanlar], referring to the lack of "peopleness," and human qualities in his novels (267). Naci further links this to the contentious feature of Tahir's novels:

> In order to ensure that this quality [opting for ideas rather than aesthetic integrity and the lack of peopleness] of his texts go unnoticed, he interspersed new ideas, as he did in *Devlet Ana* and *Kurt Kanunu*, and managed to turn these novels into literary events. What many failed to see was the fact that Kemal Tahir's novels have not turned into literary sensations because they brought new ideas to literature but rather because [they are filled with] non-literary ideas [ideas that have nothing to do with literature], ideas that were patched on his novels. No one was dwelling on what these novels yielded to the literary world, no one could do that either because there was no such thing. What was discussed, what was put forward was only the accuracy or inaccuracy of information (267).

In short, Naci, along with many others, argues that "Tahir used the instruments of social sciences rather than narrative tools that are specific to literature" (267) to obtain the prominent place he occupies now in the Turkish literary institution. For pro-Tahir scholars, the criticism levelled against *Devlet Ana* and Tahir's other novels were mostly caused by Turkish intellectuals' Kemalist taboos. Coşkun, for instance, states that the Kemalist and Republican disturbance caused by *Kurt Kanunu* and *Devlet Ana* brought a typical characteristic of Turkish intellectuals to light: "a peculiar type of intellectual who never doubt his/her consecrated values [dogmas and taboos] and expel [he uses the word "*afaroz etmek*" in Turkish which means to excommunicate] those who dare to do it" (114).

Scholars like Ezel Elverdi (2010) and Coşkun (2012) have pointed out that in order to construct his historical story, Tahir studied all scholarly material available to him. İsmet Bozdağ, for example, upon a visit to Tahir's study, observed about 3000 pages of meticulous notes on 13th-century Anatolia, Byzantines, Seljuks, and Mongols, the structure of Anatolian *Akhi* organisations, the lives and productions of bards, and the social and cultural lives of Asian and European groups in that age, including many gravures and paintings (82). Tahir did his research and read all studies on the origins and

rise of the Ottomans. Judging from the relatively accurate historical setting in *Devlet Ana*, his research served him well: his work shows obvious signs of having studied *Âşıkpaşazâde Tarihi* (a history of the Ottoman Empire until 1478), as well as available studies concerning the rise of the Ottomans, *e.g.*, the works of Fuat Köprülü, Herbert Gibbons, Friedrich Giese, and others.

In 1916, Herbert Gibbons published *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*, arguing that the commonly accepted theory of "a world empire born from a tribe of 400 tents" was not convincing to explain the origins of the Ottoman State, heating up an already contentious popular debate (Özel and Öz 21). Köprülü criticised "the 400 tent theory" as well, but he reversed Gibbons' theory and claimed that it was the Turkish and Islamist, Seljuk and Ilhanid, precedents that created the Ottoman administrative apparatus (Lowry 6). In 1924, in response to Gibbons, Friedrich Giese argued that it was the *Akhi* federation of craftsmen and merchants that shaped the administrative infrastructure in Anatolia (Lowry 6). In 1934, while Köprülü was delivering his lectures and stressing a purely Turkish origin for the Ottomans, Paul Wittek argued that the *motive force* behind the rise of the Ottomans was the holy war ideology, known as *ghaza*, adopted and maintained successfully against Christian world (Özel and Öz 22).

Devlet Ana takes many of these arguments and ideas on board, with the exception of Wittek's *ghaza* theory. In conformity with his Marxist outlook, Tahir did not attribute any specific role or mission to Islam in his novel. For instance, the role of Sheikh Edabali, who is represented as the religious, intellectual and moral compass of the Ottomans in general historiography and in historical novels like Tarık Buğra's *Osmancık* (1983), was diminished dramatically. He also portrayed Yunus Emre, whom Turkish-Islamists consider to be the Turkish progenitor of Islamic mystic poetry, one of the first humanists, and a sacred Muslim dervish, as a drinker and praiser of wine, which outraged certain

Islamist readers. Still, Tahir's subtle opposition to Wittek's theory was more the outcome of the aggressive and assaultive implications of *ghaza* ideology rather than its Islamic aspirations—remember for Tahir, the Ottomans were highly civilised, they would not invade countries in the name of God and Islam.

Tahir ascribes Ottoman success to four core elements in *Devlet Ana*: (i) *Socio-cultural and moral values* (their aspirations to establish peaceful and inclusive relationships with their neighbours and treating everyone equally justly, humanely, fairly, and tolerantly—regardless of ethnic, religious, and racial differences); (ii) *the ability to think contextually* (comprehending the politico-historical context, the power vacuum in 13th-century Anatolia, better than other groups; being at the right place and at the right time, making the right decisions, and following the right strategies); (iii) *socio-economic reasons* (despite its rich human resources Anatolia lacked the natural resources to support a powerful state; thus, it was imperative to reach to the fertile lands of Thrace and the Balkans); and (iv) *racial capacity and superiority* (so-called Turkish ascendency and capacity for state-building and their racial qualities of being courageous, smart, cunning, and strong warriors and leaders).

When interpreted on the narrowly political level, Tahir's *Devlet Ana* appears to be aimed at narrating a golden age of Turkish history. Here, the ideal portrayal and eulogistic outlook on the Ottomans and Turks, when placed within the Jamesonian frame and grasped as a narrative strategy to bring an imaginary solution to a profound contradiction, give the socio-symbolic message that despite their long-standing political and civilisational defeat in modern times, Turks are not the *others* of history. They are not a minor detail in the history that is written by Europeans. Put more simply, *Devlet Ana* is a mayday call of an impoverished nation to its glorious past. History thus presents itself as an imaginary solution to the poverty Turks have been long suffering from. Indeed,

Tahir himself stated that his aim was to "erase the impacts of the inferiority complex in Turkey resulting from the collapse of the empire and to demote the *homo-Ottomanicus*, the virtues of Ottomans, and their giftedness in building states" (cited in Moran 211-12).

Before moving on to the larger social level of textual analysis, we need briefly to outline the development of history writing in the late-Ottoman and early-Republican era, since this constitutes the politico-historical context in which antagonistic social and civilisational discourses clash with one another and reconstruct the narrative structure in *Devlet Ana*. Historiography in the Western sense began in the late Ottoman era with Ahmet Cevdet Pasha (1822-1895) and continued with intellectuals such as Namık Kemal (1840-1888), Mizancı Murat (1854-1917), and Abdurrahman Şeref (1853-1925). These latter figures not only employed methodological novelties in the realm of history writing but also realised the importance of history as an instrument for constructing national identities (Şimşek and Satan 20). After the Second Constitution in 1908, the term "Turk" took the central stage and all history eventually became national history. In this new politico-historical context, Turkist and nationalist ideology served as the main political leverage, and historians and scholars like Necip Asım (1861-1935), Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935), Hamdullah Suphi (1885-1966), and Fuat Köprülü, (1890-1966); the club *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth) and its journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland) played an important role in the rise of national history-writing (Şimşek and Satan 21). Through them, Central Asia became the heartland of national history and a Turkish history flowing from there to Anatolia began to dominate all formal Turkish historiography.

From the Tanzimat period (1839-1876) until the 1980s, the political ethos of Turkish history writing had always been under the influence of conflicting ideological and political currents. When analysed with respect to its central characteristics, this

history writing was: (i) *modernist and critical*, that is, adopting new methods and techniques, most of which were European, which went hand in hand with a harsh critique of Ottoman history writing and undermined the place of the Ottomans in the general history of Turks,[167] (ii) *conflictual*, because many corollaries and ramifications of the first two were irreconcilably at odds, as will be shown in due course, and (iii) *romantic* and *nationalist*, that is to say, a preference for affirming, pedagogic, heroic reconstructions of history was dominant rather than historical truth or accuracy.[168]

After the Second Constitution in 1908 and lasting until the 1990s, a nationalist historiography whose principal axes were romanticism, positivism, and historicism controlled all history writing, especially in history textbooks in Turkey. "Romanticism provided historians with moral power for the realisation of national ideals. While positivism was needed for the pragmatic and secular aims of short-term politics, and German historicism was appropriate for establishing the uniformity of 'ideal, state and power' in the heads [of the masses]" (Ersanlı 26). During this period, history writing is

[167] There are countless examples of this outlook in the late Ottoman and early Republican period. Köprülü, for example, in an article written in 1913, criticises the Ottoman history-writing and historians for fetishizing the writing style and subordinating the content and methodology: "There were very few distinguished figures among that coterie that would not bargain away the whole universe for the sake of finding a fresh metaphor and who, with no hesitation, would sacrifice historical truths for an unheard rhyme" (31). He also criticised the understanding that dominated history-writing from the Tanzimat period to the Second Constitution for reducing history to military and political history, stressing that historians should benefit from geographical, ethnic, cultural, artistic, social, legal, and religious histories as well (36).

[168] As a matter of fact, some Turkish intellectuals had acknowledged the imperative to prioritise national needs over historical truths. Gökalp, for example, in a short article written in 1922, divided history into two schools: the real history and the national history [*şen'i ve milli tarih*]. According to Gökalp, the former tries to see things as they were, examines historical records and documents meticulously, and "restores and reanimates the past while remaining true to all rules of the historical methodology" (47). The latter, on the other hand, serves only pedagogical aims: "In order to make children love their homeland and introduce their nation to them as the most honourable nation, the best instrument is teaching them [their national history]: the virtues and heroisms of their ancestors and the glorious and proud adventures of their nation" (48). What is worth citing from this short article, however, is Gökalp's warning in the end, which has been completely ignored by many Republican history-writers: "These two types of history are both useful and necessary. What historians should abstain from doing is inserting the free methods of national history into the real history" (48).

not approached as a school of thought or a scholarly problematic but rather a government policy (Ersanlı 26).

Although there was a shift in the emphasis placed on certain periods of Turkish history, history writing in the late-Ottoman and Republican periods did not differ at all. Ersanlı states that in both periods, the primary objective was to gain political legitimacy (67-68), and the urgent imperative of the day and the shortage of expert historians left no option but to give the full charge of writing history to politicians and nationalist intellectuals, who were actually the same people (108). For example, one of the most famous history books prepared in the early-Republican period, *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* (The Main Themes of Turkish History, 1930), commissioned by Atatürk, was prepared by a committee whose members were all, in a way or another, active in Republican politics. In fact, *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* stands as an excellent example to demonstrate the main features of Republican history-writing and its relevance to Tahir's *Devlet Ana*. In a section entitled "Why This Book Was Written?" the committee explained:

> This book was written with a specific goal in mind. In the majority of history books published in our country and in the French history books that had been taken as the main source of information for these books, the role of Turks in the world history has been intentionally or unintentionally diminished. Being misinformed about their ancestors has had damaging effects on Turks, on their self-recognition and development of their consciousness. Our main goal with this book is to correct these mistakes that harm our nation […] With this, we wish to open the way into the depths of the creative potential of our nation, to reveal the mystery of the Turkish genius and character, to show Turkish people their uniqueness and power, and to explain to them that their national development was embedded in ancient racial roots […]. (İnan and others 1)

As Ersanlı pointed out, the main emphasis of the book is on racial and natural capacity and superiority of Turks in state-building and that the power of the Ottomans was originated from their Turkishness (123). In this context, Tahir's motivation and the

message he wanted to deliver through *Devlet Ana* is very much comparable to *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları*, except the importance he attributed to the Ottomans.[169] The committee allocated fewer pages to the Ottoman history than to Chinese history and Persian history, and not a single work by an Ottoman or Turkish historian or scholar was cited. Ibn al-Nadim's *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (Fihrist, 1980), which was published in Germany, was the only primary source the committee used. What is even more striking is that of 125 works listed in the bibliography, almost all were in European (or Indo-European) languages (12 in Russian, 11 in English, 11 in German, and the 81 in French; Ersanlı, 120-21).

Following the failure of *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları*, another key development took the political stage during the CHP, the ruling party's Third Congress in 1931, which "heralded the rise of 'Kemalism par excellence'" and signified the birth and official recognition of infamous the Turkish History Thesis [*Türk Tarih Tezi*, hereafter THT] (Cagaptay 48). The thesis was later discussed, summarised, and conferred through two controversial conferences, entitled the First and Second Turkish History Congresses [*Birinci ve İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi*, in 1932 and 1937 respectively] by the Society for the Study of Turkish History, the successor of *Turkish Hearts*, to instruct teachers on how to teach Turkish history and general history in schools. Many members and delegates, including the president, Afet İnan (1908-1985), delivered passionate speeches arguing that Turkish civilisation existed while Europe still lived in ignorance and savagery, detailing many great historical developments initiated by Turks (Ersanlı 140-52).

According to accounts of the speeches, the speakers were met with vehement applauses and the atmosphere of the congresses seem to have been akin to fanatic

[169] Since the commission that prepared the book was given an extremely short time for such an enterprise, the book was full of inaccuracies and was not approved even by Atatürk (Ersanlı 124).

religious or racial secret society meetings. A climate of self-censorship, fear, hypocrisy, and collective delirium governed these congresses, and those who dared to object to the accuracy of arguments or invite attendees to properly scientific, rational, and logical approaches (as Köprülü occasionally did) were instantly blamed with treason and left no choice but to apologise and remain silent (Ersanlı 140-52).

Bora identifies the intellectual psychology that brought about the THT as a kind of megalomania (cited in Akman 87), arguing that the strong emphasis on Turks' natural capacity for state-building is, in fact, a reaction to Orientalist and Eurocentric readings of history, since owning and building a state was seen as the ultimate indicator of being civilised (Akman 96). It was probably because of this reactive nature that the THT has been considered to be too irrational, unscientific, and haphazard to be taken seriously in Turkish scholarship. Mesut Yeğen states that THT has always been interpreted through the lens of its specific context, racism and hyper-nationalism, turning it into an "accidental moment" in the history of modern Turkey. In reality, however, while its main mission was a modernising and civilising one, it brought about grave political problems and inspired numerous policies and legislations ("Türk Tarih Tezi" 19-21).[170] Beyond these concrete results, it continued to inspire and foster almost all history course books used in schools until the 1990s.

As strange as it may sound, then, given Tahir's and his followers' claim of criticising Kemalist historiography, *Devlet Ana* is ultimately an artistic outcome of Kemalist historiography. Considering its (i) principal objective of restoring Turkish national pride, confidence and a sense of security, (ii) discourse of self-affirmation, based on the Turks' natural capacity for state-building and administrative ascendency over

[170] Such as the Settlement Law of 1934 and the Law Concerning the Change of Constitutional Articles of 1937 (Yeğen, "Türk Tarih Tezi" 19-21).

people of other ethnicities and religions (Copeaux 30), and (iii) essential traits of an inferiority complex, Western-phobia, and the resultant defensiveness, *Devlet Ana* is almost a perfect exemplary of Kemalist historiography.

It is only *almost* perfect, however, because it diverges from Kemalist roots at two critical points: the great place it attributes to the Ottomans in Turkish history and its distorted Marxist outlook. Concerning the latter, *Devlet Ana* serves as a literary and political landmark for its time. Before the 1960s, Marxism was not a welcomed topic, indeed, was legally prohibited in Turkey, and many who read and write about Marxism or socialism were punished and sentenced to long-term imprisonment. Following the relatively liberal climate of the new constitution of 1961, however, Marxism became a popular topic of discussion. During this time, Turkish intellectuals began to discuss Marx's theory of the Asian mode of production set forth in *Grundrisse*, the collection of unpublished manuscripts of notes taken before writing *Capital*, and became known for the first time when it was fully and effectively published in 1953 (Belge, *Genesis* 54). In the political realm as well, Marxism took hold: Founded in 1961, the Workers Party of Turkey [*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, TİP] managed to receive significantly more votes than expected in 1965, forming a flourishing oppositional front even against continued oppression (Belge, *Genesis* 53).

The Marxist framing of Tahir's narrative structure emerged from this political context. In *Devlet Ana*, Ottoman success in expanding and forming a powerful state came about mostly from their search for fertile lands, which painted the Ottoman state as essentially an economic creation (Coşkun 359). Thus, not surprisingly, the comparative economic structures of Eastern and Western societies turns out to be one of the most prominent "characters" of the novel, the other being the comparative moral structures.

These "characters," indeed, map out the whole novel and determine almost every major and minor element of the novel, from its plot to word choices.

This insight into *Devlet Ana* reveals arguably the most important window into Tahir's thinking and the principal determining factors that have shaped the way Tahir wrote *Devlet Ana.* According to Tahir, in the East people live for their state and the state exists for the people. For this reason, Eastern people could not manage without a state and this interdependence attributes the quality of being compassionate and gracious [*rahman ve kerim*] to the state (Coşkun 352). Tahir claims that the factors that make Eastern-style state and government compassionate, benevolent and gracious are the geographical constraints and landownership structures (Coşkun 437). This understanding is obviously derivative of the Marxist concept of Asiatic mode of production, though as is typical, Tahir claims that he is bringing a national/Turkish interpretation to Western Marxism. Yet with a more brazen assurance, he asserts that this mode of production should be called the "non-Western mode of production" rather than the "Asiatic mode of production" [*ATÜT yerine BDÜB, Asya tipi üretim tarzı yerine Batı dışı üretim biçimi*] (cited in Coşkun 437).

This outlook has an important problem: He criticises the Ottoman and Republican reformers for unthinkingly adopting Western theories and patterns of thought, and claims to bring a new, truly national/local understanding of and resolution to the Turkish and Eastern case, but in fact he simply inverts the already found explanations.[171] What is tragic is the fact that many Turkish scholars have celebrated Tahir's ideas as genuinely national, undogmatic, non-submissive, and resistant responses to Western intellectual

[171] All of these counter-interpretations, or "alternative facts," were all indeed inspired by Tahir's reading of Marxist theorists such as Karl A. Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (1957) and Anouar Abdel-Malek's *Egypte, Société Militarie* (1962) (Hilav 102-103).

hegemony, whereas, as his suggestion of using the term "non-Western mode of production" in place of "Asiatic mode of production" proves, the West and the Western has always remained the central reference point of his thinking.

Ali Emre, as well, calls attention to this fallacy in *Devlet Ana*. According to Emre, in order to adjust geographical features and conditions of Anatolia to his Marxist interpretation of AMP, (ATÜT, in conventional Turkish Marxist literature), Tahir creates his fictional Anatolian setting covered with a massive swamp, constantly referring to extreme natural conditions, massive floods, and changing riverbeds (86). "Even Byzantines and other non-Muslim people (Armenians and Greeks) pray for the Ottoman leaders [to show their appreciation] for overcoming such natural obstacles and challenges" (Emre 86). In the same vein, Belge, too, draws our attention to a scene in the novel where Osman Beg tells Sheikh Edabali that Anatolia alone cannot support a powerful state since its nature is barren, prone to floods, and unstable. Thus, Osman Beg states that it is crucial that the Ottomans take over Istanbul's waterways and fertile lands of the Balkans. He further adds that only those who have fertile lands could benefit from Anatolia, since Anatolia has an inexhaustible supply of human resources, and the craft that these human resources are best at is not peasantry but founding states (188-89). As Belge puts it, Osman Beg speaks as if he "lectures Sheikh Edebali on the Asiatic mode of production and Anatolian geopolitics" (*Genesis* 55).

Moran points out that Tahir constructs *Devlet Ana* on two main pillars, moral and political, asserting the moral superiority of the Ottomans over the West on the one pillar and the genius of Turks in founding states on the other, political pillar (223-24). "In order to throw the difference between Eastern and Western societies into sharp relief, Tahir puts an exaggerated emphasis on the moral differences" (Moran 225). To this end, Tahir never holds back from portraying Notüs Gladyüs and Monk Benito as maximally monstrous

and evil characters. Notüs Gladyüs, for example, in a scene, upon seeing a male pigeon pursuing a female for mating and forcefully mounting on her, says: "'*Oh oh*! It must be just like this. Men should mount and rip up any female whenever and wherever he fancies to do so. In the marketplace, on the road, in the church…' Suddenly he winced. He crossed himself quickly" (13).[172] In another scene, Monk Benito's evil is substantiated as much exaggeratedly as Notüs Gladyüs'. Benito speaks to his friends as follows:

> It should be as chaotic as it can get. One should herd these contemptible villagers, their kids and families together with their flocks. Forcefully…They should cry and beg! When one falls, she/he should be crushed and trampled upon by horses. Women should be separated from their men and children from their mothers and they should be sold, whether for little or a lot. One should get away with murdering, vandalising, and massacring. (76)[173]

This magnified vilification and moral corruption is also reinforced by sexual perversity: Çudaroğlu and Monk Benito are both paederasts and paedophiles and Notüs Gladyüs could achieve sexual orgasm only if he chokes his partner to death. The blatant vilification of Notüs Gladyüs and Monk Benito is balanced with an overt glorification of the Ottomans. Here, Tahir faces a contradiction, however: the Ottomans must never stop taking the moral high ground, but they must also defeat their enemies, occupy lands, and rise to power. According to Moran, Tahir "resorts to two strategies: First, it is always the opponent who starts the fight; the Ottomans capture lands only while fighting to protect themselves. Second, Osman Beg is not an invader but a saviour" (230). And indeed, Tahir describes Osman Beg thusly: "Osman Beg does not plunder the lands he captures, he does not oppress people, he does not torture them, and he does not discriminate between

[172] "Oh oh! İşte böyle olmalı! Canı çektiği yerde, canı çektiği karıyı ıhtırıp paralamalı, insanoğlu!.. Pazar yerinde, yolda, kilisede…" Birden ürktü. Acele istavroz çıkardı.

[173] Kim kime olmalı, gücü yeten yetene… Köylü denilen rezilleri katmalı çoluğuyla çocuğuyla hayvan sürülerine… Çalakılıç… Ağlamalılar, yalvarmalılar! Düşeni ezmeli, çiğnetmeli atlara… Karıyı kocasından, çocuğu anasından ayırıp satmalı ucuz pahalı… Vurmuşsun, yakıp yıkmışsın, ezip bitirmişsin, yanına kar kalmalı…

Muslims and Christians. On the contrary, he brings justice to people who were repressed by *tekfurs* (Christian rulers), people whose honours, lives, and property were under the feet of *tekfurs*" (Moran 231). What could be identified as *romantic nationalist conflict*, that is, as put by Belge in the context of *Devlet Ana* and *Osmancık*, being conquerors and civilised ones [*fütuhat ile medeniyet*] simultaneously, is very common in historical origin stories (*Genesis* 47). "Writers cannot help seeking for a balance between these two forces; thus undertaking an endless dialectic, more likely a pendulum swinging. Swinging to this side, we shout 'we beat you, we destroy you,' swinging the other side we say 'but we are civilised'" (Belge, *Genesis* 47).

Belge's argument points to a more generic ground for such conflict, *viz.*, an almost unavoidable duality of the time, or the overlapping of two different time periods (ancient and modern). In line with Anderson's (*Imagined Communities*, 1991) and Bhabha's (*Nation and Narration*, 1991) arguments, Duygu Köksal's article on *Devlet Ana* also points out that this fusion of two different time periods, modern and ancient, is typical of modern nationalist ideologies (49). Nationalist historiography often anachronistically transforms present concerns and ideals into the past by, for example, creating ancient heroes in pursuit of contemporary national ideals, nationalising religious rituals and attitudes, discovering modern democratic and humanistic approaches to the plight of women or animals in historic settings, and so forth (Aydın 73-74). Suavi Aydın calls all these strategies of nationalist historiography *de-historicising history* (74).

In this peculiar duality of time, biased comparison of the Eastern and Western modes of productions collide head-on. Here, Tahir's Marxist framing of 13th-century Anatolia is given a moral superstructure that overdetermines all basic structures. Western systems (administrative, social, political, and economic) and societies are morally corrupted and evil, while the Ottomans, as the representatives of the East, stand for the

opposite. This outlook reduces Marxist dialectic into an ethical binary in which the politico-historical vision is trapped in an axis of good and evil. In other words, ethics become "the ideological vehicle and the legitimation of the concrete structures of power and domination" (Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 100-101).

As Jameson pointed out, Nietzsche "demonstrated, indeed, that what is really meant by 'the good' is simply my own position as an unassailable power center, in terms of which the position of the Other, or of the weak, is repudiated and marginalized in practices which are then ultimately themselves formalized in the concept of evil" (*The Political Unconscious* 104). This is to say, in our context, despite his elaborate Marxist infrastructural legitimation of ethical hierarchies, the basis of Tahir's Marxist thinking in *Devlet Ana* is actually his own corrupt ethics. The West is not evil because of feudalism but simply because it is different/deviant/the other (from the powerful/dominant/the Ottomans). Again, according to Jameson,

> Evil thus, as Nietzsche taught us, continues to characterize whatever is radically different from me, whatever by virtue of precisely that difference seems to constitute a real and urgent threat to my own existence. So from the earliest times, the stranger from another tribe, the "barbarian" who speaks an incomprehensible language and follows "outlandish" customs, but also the woman, […] Jew or Communist, behind whose apparently human features a malignant and preternatural intelligence is thought to lurk: these are some of the archetypal figures of the Other, about whom the essential point to be made is not so much that he is feared because he is evil; rather he is evil *because* he is Other, alien, different, strange, unclean, and unfamiliar. (*The Political Unconscious* 101)

Tahir's *Devlet Ana*, in this picture, written at a time in which Turks were rising to power and the West was declining, enables Tahir's and also the Turkish political imagination to symbolically correct history, *viz.*, Turks' political and civilisational subjugation in modern times. At this point, beneath all such political imagination and construction, the political unconscious of *Devlet Ana*—and of Tahir—gives us its first glimpse. While the foregoing analysis has revealed the *ideologeme* of *Devlet Ana* as the

ethical binary (good vs. evil), now, in order to grasp our *ideologeme* "as a form of social praxis," we need to point out its contradictory nature in the social context. Tahir's act of inflicting biased ethics onto the Marxist dialectic should be contextualised in the larger puzzle of Turkish political and intellectual thinking. As mentioned at many points in previous chapters, this includes an inferiority complex, Western-phobic thinking, insistent demand for approval, anxiety of descending from power or being dominated/colonised by the West, the fear of being separated, obsessive-paranoid thinking, and so forth.

With this, we now turn to our last horizon in *Devlet Ana*, the historical, where we read the text in terms of what Jameson calls *the ideology of form*, *i.e.,* the symbolic message transmitted to the reader through the coexistence of various formal and stylistic choices. Here, his Marxist, romantic-nationalist, obsessive-paranoid, Western-phobic, misogynist thinking and uncritical fanaticism of state find their resonances in generic and stylistic choices and lead us towards the interpretation of *Devlet Ana* in the ultimate and universal horizon of history.

Halman states that Tahir's most important and original idea concerned the non-Turkish, non-authentic essence of the Turkish novel. He failed, however, in channelling this idea into the contemporary Turkish novel and applying it to his own literary works ("Kemal Tahir'in" 96). In fact, for Halman, *Devlet Ana* appears as a "complete fiasco of such an effort at application" ("Kemal Tahir'in" 96). Halman further points out the irony that despite Tahir's anti-Western position and assertion of creating the first truly authentic Turkish novel, his most successful works were those in which he successfully employed narrative techniques and genres developed in the West, *e.g.*, *Kurt Kanunu* ("Kemal Tahir'in" 96), which is a mix of detective story, action-adventure novel and spy thriller.

In fact, *Devlet Ana*, too, borrows a great amount of ideologically, substantively, and functionally universal, if not Eurocentric, narrative devices, strategies, and techniques.

As Moran points out, the narrative structure is grounded on two parallel stories connected by the same theme of "initiation" in *Devlet Ana*: one at the *collective* level, *i.e.*, the story of the Ottomans' rise to becoming a local power and their advancement from Söğüt towards fertile lands of Western Anatolia, and the other at the *individual* level, *i.e.*, the story in which Kerim takes up arms to avenge the murder of his brother (213). Appropriately, as the narrative is developed, the Ottomans, whose leader Ertuğrul Beg is at his deathbed, are saved from droughts, famines, and anarchy, as Osman Beg takes his father's place and through a series of successful fights manages to lead his tribe to the fertile lands. While the Ottomans are tested and crowned, at the collective level, the story of Kerim takes the same path of challenge-test-salvation, at the individual level, as well.

In line with Jessie L. Weston's work *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), Moran states that at the collective level, the story of the Ottomans bears the mark of the archetypal theme of wasteland, in which a community or country is tested with drought and famine while their old king is dying (214-15). This is presented as an "initiation" story but one at the collective level, in which a group proves itself being worthy of power and rulership through a series of conflicts and struggles. At the individual level, Tahir develops a very strategic parallel initiation story, through which he not only registers another firm moral justification for the Ottomans' superiority, that is, their intellectual, artistic, and scientific devotion, but also manages to offer a captivating murder story for his readers.

Indeed, all pivotal points in Kerim's story and the development of the story are completely true to the structure of heroic romances and mythos as explained by Joseph

Campbell in *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) (Moran 219). Here, Campbell pinpoints a universal structure that works as foundational story-line for all stories that tell a hero's journey in three major phases, each with its own sub-phases: (I) *Departure*, which introduces the still-ordinary hero-to-be and includes the call to adventure, the hero-to-be's refusal of the call, and the meeting with the mentor; (II) *Initiation*, in which the hero crosses the first threshold, goes through tests, meets the enemy, approaches the inmost cave, endures the supreme ordeal or faces possible death, and seizes the sword; and (III) *Return*, which includes refusal of the return, flight from a dangerous challenge, the road back, resurrection, reward of being the master of the two worlds and restoring the old world (Vogler 6).

True to this structure, in the second section of *Devlet Ana*, Kerim is introduced to the reader in his ordinary world: a boy in pursuit of knowledge. Next, upon learning his brother's murder he comes face to face with a grave decision: reluctant to drop his book and seize the sword, Kerim at the beginning refuses the call of taking action and becoming a hero. His mother Bacıbey, however, pushes him to do it and Kerim takes up his brother's sword. Through Bacıbey's and Kaplan Çavuş's mentoring, and his companion Mavro's help, the hero, Kerim, starts to master his sword. Then, he travels into Priest Benito's cave where he is wounded severely but comes out from the cave with the treasure (10 volumes of lost manuscripts). Shortly after gaining his strength, he continues his pursuit of revenge. After an exhausting chase in the massive swamp, he and his companion Mavro catch the enemy off-guard and kill them. Kerim, who is thought to be dead by Bacıbey and others, returns home as a reborn hero. In the closing scene, Kerim confronts his still-coercing mother Bacıbey, who despite Kerim's wish and will, insists that Kerim remains a warrior. Kerim, however, refusing to submit to his mother, orders her and his fiancée to go to the kitchen and prepare him a perfect meal while he holds his

father's whip. When the women leave the scene, both happy that Kerim now is a man (for he now orders and threatens women), Kerim throws the whip, sits on the divan, and opens a book, *Siyasetnâme*, Nizam al-Mulk's book of government or mirrors for princes (650-51).

The hero-narrative parallels, which I assume are intentional, demonstrate the equally important roles of politics and science, or knowledge and administrative-militaristic skills, in Ottoman success (Moran 234). Through Kerim's story, Tahir emphasises the message that what made the Ottomans great was their mutual investment in arms and knowledge. Here, *Devlet Ana*, repeats the same old archetypal topos that is common to all literary traditions, including Kurdish one: the struggle between the sword and the pen. This time, however, presenting them in an ideal state of harmony in the Ottoman-Turkish context. Moran argues that flattering Turkish readers' national pride with its idealised story and the successful integration of effective and long-lived romance and adventure thriller narratives into the novel constitute the main reasons for *Devlet Ana*'s popularity among Turkish readers (241).[174] Indeed, this strategy of unification—of the individual story with the collective story, of the political thesis with a romance narrative—is the most important part of *Devlet Ana*'s appeal.

As a final interpretive note, it is worth mentioning why the romance genre was a strategic narrative choice for Tahir's story. According to Adam Roberts, "Marx's own 'story' or 'narrative' of history as a whole (a story where the put-upon working people of the world struggle against their oppressors and eventually triumph living—literally—happily ever after) suggests a 'story with a happy ending' paradigm" (82-83). In this vein,

[174] For Moran, *Devlet Ana* is a chivalric romance in both general and particular senses (the latter sense referring to chivalric romance literature of the Middle Ages; 212). For a detailed examination of all patterns and features of the romance genre in *Devlet Ana*, see Moran 212-223.

Tahir's combined romance-Marxist framing of the Ottoman story is very well chosen. The romance genre, however, suits Tahir's narrative needs from other methodological and ideological points as well. Recall our earlier point that Tahir's *Devlet Ana* was a mayday call to restore lost Ottoman political and civilisational dignity. Romance, as Frye has taught us, is perfectly capable of correcting such undesirable antinomies of reality.[175] For romance, as stated in a famous passage in Frye:

> is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy. This is the general character of chivalric romance in the Middle Ages, aristocratic romance in the Renaissance, bourgeois romance since the eighteenth century, and revolutionary romance in contemporary Russia. (186)

Given these characteristics, romance was a perfect generic choice for Tahir to satisfy his nation's romantic-nationalist interests while maintaining his Marxist-realist outlook. This already perfect choice is crowned with the quest form of romance, which increases its ideological appeal, for "genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message;" put differently, "form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right" (*The Political Unconscious* 127). Still, beyond all these factors, the romance genre hinges upon the ethical axis of good and evil, which makes it a match made in heaven for Tahir's ethically binary, Marxist, romantic-nationalist outlook.

Yet there is a problem: Tahir wrote *Devlet Ana* with the claim of writing the first authentically Turkish novel and many believed he had done so. True, while adopting these romance structures and narrative framing Tahir drew upon old Turkish folk stories and oral tales like *Dede Korkut* and *Kerem ile Aslı*, as the story of Kerim and his fiancée Aslı hints at. Such applications, however, are not enough to make the novel authentically

[175] Jameson, too, refers to the "Utopian transformation of a real" in romance narrative, *i.e.*, the expression of Utopian longings through "a process of transforming ordinary reality" (*The Political Unconscious* 91).

Turkish, for they still follow the romance form, which is universal. Indeed, none of the narrative strategies adopted in *Devlet Ana* seems convincingly and unquestionably Turkish, including the infamous didacticism which spurred countless dialogues and lectures over various subjects.

Scholars like Halman (2010), Belge (2001) and Seçkin Sevim (2012) also draw attention to this in their respective works on Tahir, finding Tahir's claims unfortunate, injudicious, and overdrawn, if not absurd. Halman identified Tahir's essentialist and generalising inferences regarding Eastern-Western conflict as "*hükm-i karakuşi*" (referring to the historical figure *Kadi* Karakuşi's nonsensical and arbitrary verdicts and used for verdicts that are lacking in reasonable and rational grounding) ("Kemal Tahir'in" 96). An example of such reasoning appears while arriving at his formula of the authentically Turkish novel:

> What is the foundational base of the Western novel? It is drama, class struggle and the solitude of individual in his social class. Is there the social class in my society? No. Since there is no class, there is also no class struggle. The stratification seen in [Turkish] society does not qualify as the class system. Divergences do not qualify as conflicts, either. Therefore, I will be able to create my own [authentic/Turkish] novel if I tell social drama in contrast to [individual] drama in the West. (Sağlık, "Kemal Tahir'de" 29-30)

Furthermore, for Tahir, unlike Western writers, Turkish novelists have to attend to the economic, social, political, and historical realities and peculiar conditions of their societies, which were kept hidden or distorted (Moran 186). In other words, these issues are not dealt with by social scientists, so Turkish novelists have to be economists, sociologists, historians, and political scientists at the same time. The dangerous and quite sad side of this reasoning is that Tahir built his entire authorship on it. Through this reasoning he "quit looking at the novel as an artistic production that relates human life and has a unique discourse; instead, he preferred to see it as a means for a writer to convey

the social and historical findings he discovers" (Moran 186). The result of this commitment, from an aesthetic and artistic point of view, were novels drowned by ideas.

Recalling Bakhtin's argument that "Dostoyevsky's heroes are born from ideas," Coşkun writes that the same is also valid for Tahir's heroes; pointing out that Dostoyevsky was one of Tahir's literary inspirations (171). Yet Coşkun's comparison is perhaps backwards: It is the ideas, not heroes born from ideas, that are heroes in Tahir's works—for Tahir's characters never get the chance to be born, they are all bowstringed, in old Turkish fashion, by their ideological cords. In other words, whereas in Dostoyevsky, as well as in many other accomplished writers of political fiction, ideas principally function as passageways into characters' intellectual, emotional and psychological state—their passions, fears, contradictions, dilemmas, hopes, prejudices, obsessions, and so forth—in Tahir, everything and everyone serve the same end: to prove Tahir's rightness and the legitimacy of his intellectual and political position. But such aspirations pose problems for historical stories in which checks and balances between fiction and non-fiction, accuracy and embellishment, and truth and imagination, are much more complicated and difficult to maintain.

The key to understanding why Tahir's technique of writing—let us call them—"lecture-novels" is problematic and ineffective is his simplistic approach to the knowledge. Tahir was obviously blind to the fact that his epistemological fetishism and obsession with knowledge as power is completely in tune with the hegemonic, and, from Tahir's skewed perspective, Western political outlook. His unapologetically lengthy, pedantic dialogues always bear the same claim of revealing the true picture of a given historical and political question: "I know it, therefore, I enlighten you." This patronising tone, indeed, turns the act of reading into a disturbing, annoying, and offending therapy session, in which the analysand gets tired of being told his history by the analyser. I argue

that it is for this reason that so many readers find Tahir not unsuccessful as a writer, but simply intolerable.

At the narrowly political level, then, *Devlet Ana*'s meaning could be captured as the story of the ascent of the Ottomans and, thus, the rise of the Turks to power. The same narrative could be deciphered in the larger and more latent social level as the story of the descent of Turks from power. In order to annihilate the anxiety of this pressing reality, or suspend it, Tahir knocks on the door of the victorious history of the Ottomans. His ethical binary resolution to profound historical and political contradictions, his use of the romance genre, his blind admiration for the state and the Ottomans, and his strong hatred of the West and women all together reveal the unconscious of *Devlet Ana* as the idealisation of power. Tahir's high esteem for the Ottomans is rooted in his desire to power, just as his Western-phobia is the outcome of losing his ideal to the West. Tahir, in short, worships and idealises power, and this is the real base for his misogynistic, xenophobic, anti-religious, and anti-Western writing.

II. History, that Hurting Reality: Ereb Shemo's *Dimdim*

"Bolshevik and activist before the revolution, member of the Kurdology vanguard in Russia, writer in Armenia, exile in Siberia," (Allison, **"**Memory and the Kurmanji Novel" 207) Ereb Shemo, also called Arab Shamilov, was born on October 23, 1897, in the village of Sûsiz in Kars, a city in north-eastern Turkey. The city fell under the rule of the Russian Empire from the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 until Turkish forces recaptured it after the Armenio-Turkish War in late 1920 (Alakom, *Kars Kürtleri* 21). Shemo was the third child of an extremely poor Yazidi family entirely supported by the

father's wage as a shepherd and some additional earnings from various chores Shemo and his siblings did for other families (Boyik 105).

Shemo did not record his life, quite a large extent of his writing was based on his early memories, though. In this perspective, his first novel *Şivanê Kurmanca* (The Kurdish Shepherd, 1935) occupies a special place in Shemo's oeuvre. As told in an episode of the novel, in order to contribute to the family budget, he started work at a very early age as an errand boy in a Russian school, where he met a Russian student who gave him a Russian alphabet. Devoting his leisure to studying the alphabet, Shemo eventually taught himself reading and writing and, when a teacher discovered his abilities, he was admitted to the school tuition-free (Boyik 106). After finishing school, Shemo continued to work as a servant for wealthy Turkish, Armenian, Russian and Greek families, and by the age of 15, Shemo could speak Turkish, Armenian, Russian, Greek, Georgian, Azari, and German to a degree that he could work as an interpreter in many of these languages (Xelîl 96).

Shemo's abilities as a linguist changed his life during the First World War. At one point, when a Russian regiment was deployed very close to Shemo's village, Russian commanders learn out about Shemo's ability to speak Kurdish, Armenian, Russian, and Turkish fluently, they hired him to work for the regiment as an interpreter, a position he kept from 1914 to 1916. During this period, he not only advanced his Russian language skills but also embarked on a new personal, intellectual, and political path, thanks to the new communist and Bolshevik ideas and books he was introduced to (Boyik 107). Bolshevik ideas and principles, *viz.*, struggling for the rights of oppressed and deprived classes, giving lands to villagers, fighting against *agha*s and *beg*s and preventing them from oppressing peasants, resonated greatly with Shemo's own life (Gören 19). After the October Revolution when the Bolsheviks seised power, Shemo went to Stavropol, Russia,

where he joined the Red Army and became a member of Communist Party in 1918 (Alakom, "Ereb Shemo" 167).

In 1920 Shemo went to Moscow and attended the Lazarian Institute, where he also worked, after finishing his studies, until 1924. In 1924, he returned to Armenia and joined the campaign of propaganda for the accomplishment of the Bolshevik economic program in the Kurdish villages of Armenia (Alakom, "Ereb Shemo" 167). During this period the Armenian government launched a literacy campaign for the Kurdish people, establishing many schools and classrooms in Kurdish villages. Shemo also took part in these activities. In 1929, together with Assyrian Kurdish scholar Ishak Marogulov and under the supervision of H.A. Orbeli, Shemo co-prepared a Kurdish alphabet in Latin script entitled *Xwe Xwe Hînkirina Zimanê Kurdî* (Learning Kurdish on Your Own), thus Latinising Kurdish education in Soviet Armenia and the USSR (Alakom, "Ereb Shemo" 168). Still, Shemo's biggest contribution to Soviet Kurmanji literature was his work on the publication of the *Riya Teze* journal (New Path, 1930-2003), one of the long-lasting Kurdish periodicals of all times. He also published his first works, mostly political pieces, in this journal, in 1930: *Emrê Lenîn* (Lenin's Order), *Terîqa Rêvolûsîya Oktyabrê* (The History of October Revolution), and *Kolxoz û Kara Wê Ji Gundîyan re* (Kolkhoz and its Benefit for Villagers) (Alakom, "Ereb Shemo" 168). With the single exception of *Şems* (Sun, 1921), a selection of Kurdish reading materials, it can be said that Soviet Kurdish literature started with the publication of *Riya Teze* (1930), since Soviet Kurdish writers published their first literary works here and it was through this journal that a Kurdish readership was finally established (Reşît 204).

The Soviet policies towards small nations and their cultural and literary advancements changed completely after 1937 when Stalin rose to power. During the oppressive period under the dictatorship of Stalin, many writers and intellectuals were

exiled in Siberia, including Shemo, who spent almost 20 years working in extremely difficult conditions in a series of gulags (Vanly 165).[176] Shemo was allowed to return home after Stalin's death in 1956 and immediately re-engaged in his literary activities. Despite the fact that autobiographical references had always been a hallmark of Shemo's writing, he abstained from mentioning his years in Siberia, at least in his novels (Vanly 165). Shortly after his return, he published *Berbang* (Dawn) in 1958, which was followed by *Jîyanna Bextewar* (Happy Life, 1959). In 1959, he wrote a scene for the movie *Kurded Ermenîstanê* (Kurds of Armenia), directed by C. Jambarian (Öztaş 62). Shemo's only non-autobiographical novel *Dimdim* (Castle Dimdim) was published in 1966, and this was followed by his last novel *Hopo* (A Guy Named Hopo, 1969).

"Telling communism through the eyes of Kurds," in 1967 Shemo was awarded by the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic for his cultural activities, and in 1978 he received both the Order of the Red Banner and the Order of Friendship of Peoples medals, the two highest awards in the Soviet Union (Öztaş 57). Shemo passed away on May 21, 1978, in Yerevan. Clearly, compared to Tahir's life, Shemo's went mostly undocumented, a fact largely due to his disadvantaged upbringing, which was exacerbated by his Yazidi Kurdish background and the extreme conditions of his Siberian exile. We are thus able to collect only anecdotes regarding his life from testimonies of his students, friends, and other acquaintances. For instance, although not quite clear when and how, it is said that he met Lenin and informed him about the conditions of Kurds (Xelîl 97). Likewise, we are told that when Maxim Gorky visited Yerevan, Shemo met him, too, and offered him

[176] In a short piece, based on the memory of an interview done with Shemo in 1972, Bavê Nazê states that during their conversation Shemo attributed his survival to his stamina and body strength that were a product of the dire and difficult living conditions he was raised in (Shemo, *Hopo* 6).

a copy of *Şivanê Kurmanca*, to which Gorky responded: "Many Kurds speak the language of their writer Arab Shamilov" (Boyik 113).

Shemo's original literary works are comprised of four novels (*Şivanê Kurmanca*, *Jiyana Bextewar*, *Dimdim* and *Hopo*) and a story entitled *Kurdên Elegezê* (The Kurds of Elegez). His first literary activities started after the 1930s when he published a play entitled *Koçekê Derewîn* (Koçek the Liar, 1930), which was actually an adaptation of an Armenian play (Boyik 111). Shemo himself used the word "*taklidî*" (imitation or adaptation) when describing this play (Jiyan 6). The play tells the story of a counterfeit religious figure, *Koçek* Îsmaîl, who exploits common people's religious sentiments and makes a living for himself. Like other texts of the same topic, the deceitfulness of religious figure is revealed through a trap involving women and money, highlighting religious figures' presumed propensity for sex and material benefits.[177] The moral of the play, as stated at the end, is that religious leaders do not let common people receive education because they benefit from their ignorance. The play ends with a slogan: "We need education, enough with the dark" [*lazime xoendin; base tarî*] (39).

Shemo wrote *Kurdên Elegezê* in 1936. This story, like *Şivanê Kurmanca*, which I discuss below, is mostly autobiographical and could be read as a follow-up chapter to *Şivanê Kurmanca,* with respect to both content and style. Following this story, upon his return from the Siberian exile, Shemo published his second novel, *Jiyana Bextewar*. The novel portrays the Kurdish people's flight from Ottoman oppression, refuge in Russia, and the safe and peaceful life they led here. In *Jiyana Bextewar*, like in *Şivanê Kurmanca*, Shemo tells about the social lives of Soviet Kurds, their customs and traditions, daily routines, and dire living conditions. His last novel, *Hopo*, too, could be grouped with

[177] The play, in many respects, is reminiscent of Şinasi's *Şair Evlenmesi* (The Wedding of a Poet, 1860), a pioneering Turkish play in the Western dramatic style.

Şivanê Kurmanca and *Jiyana Bextewar* in terms of the story and style; in fact, it could be seen as a follow-up to the latter.

It was his first novel, *Şivanê Kurmanca*, however, that gave Shemo his popularity, as this is accepted to be the first novel written in Kurdish. Like many other first literary initiatives of modern Kurdish literature, this novel has a very complex and unusual story of writing and publishing.[178] In his detailed foreword, "Destpêka Romana Kurdî: *Şivanê Kurmanca*" (The Beginning of the Kurdish Novel: *Şivanê Kurmanca*), Mustafa Aydogan details how some parts of the novel were first written in Armenian and published in an Armenian magazine *Grakan Dîrkêrûm* (issue 7 [1930] pages 27-34) under the title of *Şivan* (The Shepherd) (Aydogan, "Destpêla Romana Kurdî" 9). This very same text was published a year later, in 1931, in Russian with no mention that it was, in fact, a translation from Armenian. The same year saw the publication of a translation of the text into Russian entitled *Kûrdskîy pastûx* (The Kurdish Shepherd). As Aydogan points out, these versions and translations comprised only 16 of a total of 21 episodes of the whole text of *Şivanê Kurmanca*, the Kurmanji version ("Destpêla Romana Kurdî" 10). In 1933, the 1931 Russian version of the text was translated into German by Chr. Oelbergî and published under the title of *Der kurdische Hirt* (Aydogan, "Destpêla Romana Kurdî" 10).

The complete text of *Şivanê Kurmanca*, in Kurmanji, was published only in 1935. In the same year the Russian version, too, was published along with a note that it was translated into Russian from Kurdish (Aydogan, "Destpêla Romana Kurdî" 10). In this new Russian edition another piece entitled "*Kûrdî Alagyaza*" (the long story of *Kurdên Elegezê*) was added to *Şivanê Kurmanca* (Aydogan, "Destpêla Romana Kurdî" 11). The curious adventure of the novel did not end there, though. In 1935, the Russian version

[178] *Lîs* publishing house issued a complete edition of the text in Diyarbakır in 2009, including a detailed foreword by Mustafa Aydogan, a transliteration of the text into Latin script, and the original text in Cyrillic scripts.

was translated into French by Basil Nikitin. Either because its original Kurmanji version was lost at the time or it was not known to people in Kurdistan, Nureddin Zaza translated this French version into Kurmanji under the title of *Şivanê Kurd* [a Kurmanji translation of French translation of Russian translation of Kurmanji novel] and published it in Koln in 1990 ("Destpêla Romana Kurdî" 31). This version, along with the Turkish translation, *Kürt Çoban*, were the most circulated versions of *Şivanê Kurmanca* (from Kurmanji into Russian-into French-into Kurmanji-into Turkish) in Turkey until 2009, when *Lîs* published the complete and original text (Aydogan, "Destpêla Romana Kurdî 34).

Şivanê Kurmanca, apart from being the first Kurdish novel, also is a quintessential of the Soviet Kurdish literature and Kurmanji novel in general, for it shows what I argue to be five fundamental characteristics of both literary traditions: (i) *the history of the undocumented people* (the immense role and importance of personal history, autobiographical anecdotes, poignant memories and the construction of a narrative self); (ii) *Dickensian portrayal of life* (excessively dire living conditions and survival in difficult times which throw the struggle between good and evil into a sharper relief as the master theme); (iii) *orality and simplicity* (from a stylistic point of view, the text bears the stamp of a non-complex, folkloric, and oral narrative structure and language); (iv) *hasty and laconic narrative* (the text lacks the complexity and length that the topic and plot requires, most parts are told in a rushed manner which is full of narrative gaps and absences); and (v) *engaged and didactic discourse* (narrating from demonstratively ideological and political point of view and being overtly instructive).

Concerning the first trait, *the history of the undocumented people*, the narrative in Shemo's *Şivanê Kurmanca* depends heavily on agony, violence, and grief-filled memories of the past, as well as on the records of Kurdish life and its daily rituals. In this respect, Shemo's novel is a forerunner of quite a long list of Kurdish narratives. As

Christine Allison points out, many Kurdish writers have based their novels on their own life stories and histories of their families, tribes, and villages, not those of their nations.[179] These stories, says Allison, "can hardly be called a self-narrative, but it is a narration of a personalized past that has close links with identity. Like the self-narrative, it is a work of memory" ("Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel" 104). Allison explains this well:

> Moreover, in many ways a memoir is a very natural early prose genre for Kurdish speakers to develop, because of its resemblance to normal speech genres. Ereb Shemo's conversational style, with the anecdotes and the references to what became of the individual characters, is highly reminiscent of ordinary speech patterns. It is only a short step from, say, a respected uncle sitting amongst his family recalling episodes from his life [...]. (Allison, "Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel" 116)

Through this recording of personal and collective memories, in other words, Kurdish writers recorded histories that otherwise might go unrecorded, that is, histories of *undocumented people*. No doubt, the oppressive regimes that prohibited writing and publishing in Kurdish have actually served to encourage these works; in a way, in the absence of anthropologists, sociologists, and historians, Kurdish writers *felt responsible* for recording the undocumented lives of undocumented people. Narratives of many Kurmanji novels thus gain a unique quality observable in their simultaneous attention to the records of the enduring (memories, anecdotes, biographies, autobiographies, and other generic ways of recording the past) and the ephemeral (daily lives, rituals and routines, minuscule details of Kurdish village life, and so forth). This has been a unique quality of modern Kurmanji narrative from its inception.

[179] Allison lists as examples *Sê Şev û Sê Roj* (Three Nights and Three Days, 1999) the first book of Laleş Qaso's trilogy and Mehmed Uzun's fictionalised biographies of Kurdish notables Memduh Selim Beg in *Siya Evînê* (The Shadow of Love, 1989), Evdalê Zeynikê in *Rojek Ji Rojên Evdalê Zeynikê* (A Day from Evdale Zeynike's Days, 1991), and Celadet Bedir Khan in *Bîra Qederê* (The Well of Destiny, 1995). One can add to the list *Asim* (A Boy Named Asim, 2007) and the first volume of *Av Zelal Bû* (Water Has Become Clear, 6 volumes, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2012) by Mezher Bozan, *Jiyanek* (A Life, 2004) by Bûbê Eser, *Îtbarî* (Dignity, 1980-2007) by Wezîrê Eşo, a story, "*Ber Çetinya Huner*" (Because of the Difficulty of Art) by Wezîrê Nadirî in his collection *Nûbar* (Spring, 1935), among others.

Two examples come to the fore, here: Fuad Temo's "Çîrok" (The Story) published June 6, 1913, in the first two issues of the journal *Rojî Kurd* [The Kurdish Sun]), which is known to be the first modern story written in Kurmanji. Here, Temo simply tells a day from the poverty-stricken life of an orphan Kurdish boy named Şewêş, in an extremely sketchy and laconic narrative—only a couple of passages—in which Şewêş and his poor shepherd father are introduced and his father is taken ill. The story remained unfinished, however, and the reader never finds out what has become to Şewêş and his father. This story is nevertheless a rudimentary forerunner of the modern Kurdish narrative and *Şivanê Kurmanca*. In fact, one might actually find the rest of Şewêş's story in *Şivanê Kurmanca*. The other example is a short essay entitled "Bir Kürd Mahbubesinin Sabah Meşguliyeti" (Morning Chores of a Kurdish Girl), by Hakkârili Abdurrahim Rahmi, who is also known as the writer of the first Kurdish play *Memê Alan* (Mem of Alan, 1919). This fictional piece is written in Turkish with two songs in Kurmanji and published in November 28, 1918 issue of the journal *Jîn*. It only records a morning in the happy nomadic life of a beautiful Kurdish girl.

Both of these narratives, as well as their more elaborated successors like *Şivanê Kurmanca* and many others, are marked by the specific quality identified by Allison above as "an exploration of what it means to be Kurdish." This exploration, as exemplified in the following passage from *Şivanê Kurmanca*, is mostly implemented through a narrative operation in which *the enduring* and *the ephemeral* overlap:

> That winter, the house in which we were staying, after we distributed the sheep to their owners, was warmer. We had plenty of *ardû* [fuel, especially manure and firewood]. Our mother would zealously light the *tendûr* [floor or wall furnace]. When the *tendûr* became heated we would sit around it. […] My father would collect our payment for shepherding and cow herding, sometimes in cash sometimes in wheat. It was half a kilo or a kilo

> per sheep or cow [for taking care of the herd], starting from early spring until autumn. (Shemo, *Şivanê Kurmanca* 59)[180]

Note, in this passage, what I refer to above as the *Dickensian portrayal of life*. There are no comically repulsive and iconic characters as seen in Dickens, but *Şivanê Kurmanca* and many other novels in Kurdish, are reminiscent of the *Dickensian* portrayal of life in poverty, social injustice, and socio-economic crises. *Şivanê Kurmanca* opens, in fact, with the sentence, "Shemo was a poverty-stricken Kurd" [Şemo kurmancekî kesîb bû] (53).

Against this background we can see that Shemo's Marxist outlook and own life circumstances played an important role in his writing. He recurs frequently to the abundant lives of the *agha*s and *beg*s contrasted with the poor villagers' daily fight against poverty. Apart from this kind of politics or class-based injustices, Shemo also draws out the inherent evil in men and the constant conflict between the good and evil, which throw poverty into a sharper relief and render his portrayals even more *Dickensian*. When Shemo wants to marry his cousin Karê, for example, he is asked to pay a very high bride price by Karê's father (who is also Shemo's aunt's husband). After working one and half years to collect the money, Shemo is able to make the payment; however, his uncle denies that he took the money and does not give his daughters' hand—thus providing another *Dickensian* motif of an evil relative. When Karê's father threatens Shemo with a gun, a tumult breaks out and Shemo shoots his uncle (*Şivanê Kurmanca* 125-31).

As Allison also points, the style of the novel is based on *orality* and *simplicity* which form the hallmark of Shemo's writing—conversational vocabulary and sentence structure, a narrative that is reminiscent of someone recalling his/her past orally, and constant references giving a direct, intimate note to tell what happened next (Allison,

[180] Wê zivistanê, wextê me pez li mala bela kir, xanîyê em têda diman, idî germ bû. Ardûyê me êpêce hebû. Dîya me eşq û dil tendûr dadida. Wextê tendûr gur dibû, em dora tendûrê rûdiniştin. […] Heqê pêz bavê min distand, cara peretî, cara jî genim. Serê pezekê yan dewarekê diket nîv kîlo yan kîlok genim. Ji ewlê biharê hetta paîzê.

"Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel" 109). Complex sentences and ideas, profound observations and insights, and philosophically and psychologically elaborated analysis are rare. This is partly because the literature still heavily depended on orality and folkloric material and partly because the interaction of other disciplines (sociology, philosophy, history, *etc.*) in Kurdish is extremely limited, if not completely absent (not to mention the lack of contact with the classics of Kurdish literature and the other parts of Kurdistan). Indeed, it is striking that, despite the complexity and modernity of the Kurdish question, which is the most influential motivation for almost all Kurdish literary production, the overwhelming majority of Kurdish literary productions have remained dependent on simple and folkloric narratives. This also causes the narratives to be somewhat *hasty and laconic*, remote from the inherently meticulous and detailed, verbose, and multi-dimensional (the coordination and cooperation between the elements of narrative, *i.e.*, time, place, character, theme, plot, and so forth) quality of the novel genre.

Although there are a number of reasons for such hasty and laconic narratives, such as political oppression, censorship, and unfavourable socio-economic conditions, in the case of Shemo, I argue that two additional reasons account for this hastiness: first, the peculiarities of the Soviet context (ideological and political dominance on literary production),[181] and second, the urgent need for writing in Kurdish, as problematised and narrated in Metê's *Êş*. In this vein, Shemo's writing, re-writing, trans-writing, translating, and re-rewriting of the same novel (*Şivanê Kurmanca*, *Kurdên Elegez*, *Berbang* and even

[181] Allison's explanation for the case of *Berbang* is instructive here. Noting that the novel "is a reprise of *Şivanê Kurmanca* and many passages are word for word the same," Allison explains new episodes and what small differences do exist by the distinct political contexts in which *Şivanê Kurmanca* and *Berbang* were published ("Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel" 111). Certain qualities of Soviet Socialist Realism, such as the repetition of a master plot, undoubtedly also influenced Shemo's writing. Katherine Clark states that Soviet writers always managed to find ways out of the straightjacketed literature that was supervised by party ideology (7), in our case apparently party ideology and master plot won recurrently.

Jiyana Bextewar and *Hopo*) is reminiscent of the dilemma of Metê's hero, Darîn, who is forced to write a book in Kurdish, as well as Celadet's writing under many different pseudonyms just to prove the existence of many Kurdish writers.

As for the last characteristic, Shemo's most novels are politically and ideologically *engaged and didactic*. With its minimalist style of narrative, for example, *Şivanê Kurmanca* ends with the very propaganda of new order that has eliminated the rule of feudal leaders and restored social justice, equality, ethnic harmony and brotherhood: "The October Revolution and The Constituent Assembly, in fact, eradicated the oppression of the Sultan Nikolai [Tsar Nikolai II], the bloodthirsty, and the oppression of *beg*s, *agha*s and *mullah*s, and that of *daşnak*s" [Armenian nationalists] (198). This minimalist quality is, no doubt, due to a great extent to Shemo's socialist outlook and the aesthetic of *Socialist Realism* that governed the Soviet literary institution in the time. This politico-literary ideal, according to C. Vaughan James' study *Soviet Socialist Realism*, followed three basic principles: First, *naródnost'* (literally, people-ness), which was defined in Marxist-Leninist aesthetics as the meeting point of artistic quality, ideological content and social function. *Naródnost* draws a clear line from art to the masses and demands that "art must fulfil a specific social function" (James 13). Accordingly, art should be populist and popular at the same time, that is, "must not only be intelligible to the masses, it must spring from them" (James 8). This is why the everyday life experiences of ordinary people are so important in this literature. Second, *klássovost'* (class-ness), which could be identified as the class characteristics of art, demands that art must function "to further the interests of the masses," meaning villagers and workers. The *klássovost'* quality "is expressed in the manner, extent and profundity of its conscious reflection of reality, and especially of the contradictions in society" (James 10). And third, *partíinost* (party-ness), which is the most controversial principle of Soviet Socialist

Realism and the reason that equates it with propaganda literature, calls for "the identification of the artist with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)" and requires that art become an activity of the Party (James 1-13).

In short, Socialist Realism demands art to be populist (proletarian, didactic, and folkloric), realistic (class representative and typical), and partisan (tendentious, propagandist, optimistic, and party-minded). These principal qualities influenced Soviet Kurdish writers dramatically, bringing about some distinct aspects that are not common in Kurmanji literature created both in Turkey and the diaspora. One such quality is the level of optimism in the Soviet Kurdish literature. Shemo's *Jiyana Bextewar* and *Hopo*, Eliyê Evdilrehman's *Morof* (Morof, 1957) and *Xatê Xanim* (Lady Xatê, 1959), Egîdê Xudo's *Dê û Dêmarî* (Mother and Stepmother, 1986), and many other novels and stories adopt a considerably positive outlook when compared to writings of Kurmanji literature produced in homeland and diaspora.[182]

Another decisive impact of socialist realism is that the role and place of folkloric and formulaic narrative, populist and popular themes, typicality and familiarity, and so forth is somewhat stronger compared to other branches of Kurmanji literature. Clark argues that the socialist realist socio-aesthetic system was "the one invariant feature of all Soviet novels, that is, that they are ritualized…they repeat the master plot, which is itself a codification of major cultural categories" (9). Clark stresses the role of ritual in these novels; this feature renders them heavily conventionalised and strongly formulaic (Clark

[182] Probably the best example of this is a story of Emerîkê Serdar (b.1935) entitled "*Serhatîya Hubekê*" (An Adventure of a Love, 1974), published in his story collection *Destê Dê* (Mother's Hand, 1974). Serdar tells a love story, *à la* Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, between two young Kurds, Keleş and Sêvê, who come from hostile families. The story unfolds in a predictable way, with the families' feud at first overwhelming the young couple's love, culminating in Sêvê being found dead in her bed towards the end of the story. Serdar surprises the reader with a happy ending, however: after Sêvê's death, both families regret that they refused to recognise their children's love for one another. Next, Sêvê wakes up from death, which turned out only to be a lethargy sleep, and the two marry (31).

9). Such ritual-ness of the Socialist Realism explains and resonates with the formulaic, folkloric, and typical qualities of its form and content and explains the dominance of these qualities in Soviet Kurdish literature as well.

After this long digression let us now turn to the novel and provide a summary of the story. Although not half as voluminous as *Devlet Ana*, *Dimdim* is a very difficult novel to summarise since its episodic and extremely disorderly and loose plot line follows no narrative thread. Indeed, what actually serves as the narrative spine is continuous Iranian attacks and the responses of Kurds of Castle Dimdim to them. Accordingly, under the leadership of Xano, whose non-aristocratic roots are stressed, the Beroderan tribe of Kurds has founded a cosmopolitan trade hub and an equalitarian, just, and prosperous society in Castle Dimdim, in a mountainous region where the Ottoman and the Safavid borders meet. This Kurdish haven disturbs both Sultan Ahmed and Shah Abbas, particularly the latter. Shah sends his armies many times to invite Xano to declare his tribe's loyalty to him, but Xano rejects the invitation every time. He not only successfully repels Iranian and Turkish attacks but also establishes a union between all other Kurdish tribes, helping those attacked by the Ottoman and the Safavid armies. Frustrated, Shah sends his armies to destroy Castle Dimdim. Following a heroic resistance, food and water supplies run out and a traitor informs the Iranian army about the water system in the castle. Remaining loyal to their oath that instead of living under Shah's rule they will die free, Xano and his tribe blow up the castle, killing everyone in the act. In a short note entitled "Epilog," Shemo states that this was not the last fight for freedom and independence by Kurds, recounting a concise history of Kurdish struggle for freedom

simply by mentioning names of some Kurdish leaders who had fought towards this end—Bedir Khan, Yêzdîn Şêr, Sheikh Ubeydullah, and Sheikh Mehmud Berzenci (253).[183]

Having outlined the story, we now turn to our analysis within the frame of Jamesonian model to shed light on the meaning of the text as a socially symbolic act. But first, some contextual explanation on both that in which the story of *Dimdim* is set, the semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates of the 16th and 17th centuries, and that in which *Dimdim* was written, that of the Kurdish literature in the Soviet Armenia in the 20th century, is needed. Regarding the latter context, there existed a close relation between Soviet Kurdish literature and Kurmanji literature in Turkey and the diaspora.[184] The Soviet Kurds were greatly influenced by early Bolshevist nationalities policies encouraging and supporting "small nations" to engage with their own literary, educational, and cultural activities in their own languages (Leezenberg, "A People Forgotten by History" 748). This policy allowed Soviet Kurds to attend to their national need for institutions of education, publishing and broadcasting, as well as scholarly work on Kurdish language and culture—systematic and legal, rather than episodic and clandestine, for the first time in their modern history. Thus, in the early 20th century, the Soviet Kurds "had greater scope to develop and cultivate a national language and culture

[183] Jan Dost makes the same move in the start and at end of his novelesque epic *Kela Dimdimê* (The Castle of Dimdim). In his 1988 foreword, Dost recounts a long history of Kurdish resistance, starting from Kawa the Blacksmith, the mythical hero who is believed to have led an uprising against the brutal and oppressive rule of Zahak, to Mazlum Doğan, one of the founders of the PKK who set his prison cell on fire and hanged himself on Newruz day, 21 March, 1982 as a protest against Turkish state oppression and the inhumane conditions in Diyarbakır prison. Dost also ends his epic with the same history of resistance, mentioning all the pivotal moments and leaders (183-88).

[184] Renas Jiyan and other scholars use the term "Caucasus Kurmanji Literature" [*Wêjeya Kurmancî ya Qafkasî*] or "Yazidi School" [*Ekola Êzdî*] to identify this literature (235). I opted for the term "Soviet Kurdish literature" throughout this chapter since the literature that was created by the Soviet Kurds was greatly under the influence of Soviet politics and literature (Armenian and Russian literature, Socialist Realism, small-nations policy, and so forth). The geographical or religio-cultural identification fall relatively short when naming this literature since these attributes held very little sway in comparison with its Soviet characteristics.

than the far bigger Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iran and Iraq" (Leezenberg, "A People Forgotten by History" 748).

After the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the Ottoman Empire lost important territories along the north-eastern edge of Anatolia, including Kars and Batumi to the Russian Empire. With the Russian conquest of Georgia, eastern Armenia and northern Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 19th century, not only did an important part of northern Kurdistan become neighbour to the Russian Empire, but also the majority of southern Caucasia with its sizeable Kurdish minorities fell under the Russian rule (Vanly 154). Based on the census of 1897, Ismet Chériff Vanly informs us that at the end of 19th century, the Russian empire had a total population of an approximate 100,000 Kurds approximately (154-55). Probably more than half of this population remained in north-eastern Turkey after the 1921 Treaty of Kars was signed, and cities with large populations of Kurds, *viz.*, Kars, Iğdır, and Ardahan, re-joined Turkey. A significant number of this USSR Kurdish population, however, was settled in what would later come to be known as Soviet Armenia and Azerbaijan. While the majority of the Kurdish population settled in the latter had migrated from Iran and belonged to the Shia faith, those settled in Soviet Armenia were mostly of the Yazidi faith and came to Armenia in waves mainly during the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-29 and the massacres of 1915-18 (Yilmaz 802).[185]

In Armenia, according to the 1924 figures, the Yazidi Kurdish population numbered 15,000-20,000, a greater part of whom were semi-nomadic, and the literacy

[185] The memory of these years of massacres and violence remained vivid through novels and stories created by mostly Yazidi Kurdish writers of Soviet Armenia, *e.g.*, Shemo's *Jiyana Bextewar* and *Berbang*, Cindî's *Hewari* (Cry for Help, 1967) and Sehîdê Îbo's *Kurdê Rêwî* (Kurdish Wayfarers, 1979), Wezîrê Eşo's *Îtbarî* (Dignity 1980-2007) and Wezîrê Nadirî's story "*Ber Çetinya Huner*" (The Difficulty of Art, in *Nûbar*, 1935). Mostly fleeing from Sunni Muslim oppression and episodic massacres, perhaps not surprisingly, these Yazidi groups found sympathy among Armenian and Georgian communities of the time.

rate among them was around 1 per cent (Yilmaz 801). In the end of 1920, the Soviet Government that was established in Armenia decreed the opening of schools that teach in minority groups' languages. To this end, Hakob Xazaryan (known as Lazo) prepared a Kurdish alphabet based on Armenian scripts and a Kurdish course book entitled *Şems* in 1921. In the same year the first school teaching in Kurdish was inaugurated in *Eşterek* Orphanage (in Ashtarak, a town in the Aragatsotn Province of Armenia) (Reşît 203). It was not a coincidence that the first school teaching in Kurdish was opened in an orphanage, because there was an overwhelming number of Kurdish orphans, mostly war refugees of Yazidi origin, at the time. Thus, as a natural outcome of this, many of the first generation Soviet Kurdish writers and intellectuals, who were mostly coming from a Yazidi origin, were orphans; among them Hecîyê Cindî (1908-1990), Emînê Evdal (1906-1964) Cerdoyê Gênco (1904-1945), Casimê Celîl (1908-1998), and Ûsivê Beko (1909-1969). Indeed, it is for this reason that Soviet Kurdish literature in the 1930s is also called the Literature of Orphans [*Yetimlerin Edebiyatı*] (Reşît 205).[186]

Soviet Armenia's and Armenian intellectuals and educators role in the development of the Soviet Kurdish literature was not exclusive to legalisation, pioneering, and assisting. During the education campaign which was implemented shortly after the publication of Shemo and Margulov's Kurdish alphabet in 1929, of 13 educators who were actively working in teaching Kurdish, only one, Eminê Evdal, was Kurdish, the rest 12 educators were all Armenian (Öztaş 54). Armenian and Russian literatures

[186] Recalling the strict prohibition of reading and writing for common people of the Yazidi faith (in accordance with their religious hierarchy, only Shaikhs of the Âdâni lineage group had the right to do so), Jiyan points out that Yazidi-origin Kurdish writers of the Soviet Union were able to receive an education and create Soviet Kurmanji literature only because so many of them were orphans–had they been raised in their own families, very few of them would have learned how to read and write (248).

guided Kurdish writers also through translations: between 1931 and 1937, around 15 books were translated from Armenian and Russian into Kurdish (Reşît 204).

Kurdish education and publication movement in Soviet Armenia peaked in the early 1930s. In fact, at the end of the 1932-1933 academic year, there were 40 Kurdish schools with the total of 71 teachers and 2000 students in Soviet Armenia (Öztaş 27). In order to publish books in Kurdish a particular Kurdish publishing section was opened in State Publishing House of Armenia and in 1931 Hakov Qezeryan's tale *Serhatiya Casim* (Casim's Memoir) which tells the story how Bolshevism had reached the Kurds, was translated from Armenian into Kurmanji by Cindî and Evdal, and was published here (Leezenberg, "A People Forgotten by History" 757; Boyik14). Between 1929 and 1937, more than 70 books (20 of them was prepared for schools) were published in Kurdish in Soviet Armenia (Reşît 205). This somewhat modest quantity would seem an over-achievement once we remind ourselves that the number of books published in Kurdish in Turkey between 1923 and 1990 was less than 20, despite the fact that the Kurdish population was more than 500 times larger than that in Soviet Armenia (Malmisanij, *The Past and Present* 21-22).

Both Tosinê Reşît and Eskerê Boyik analyse Kurdish literary and cultural activities in Soviet Union in three periods: (i) *Dema Ewlîn* (The First Period, between 1920-1937) is the period in which despite the state promotion of such activities the scarcity of Kurdish literati held an immense sway on the (under)development of Kurdish studies; in Boyik's formulation "opportunities are ample but literati cadre is limited" [*mecal pir in, lê kadroyê zana kêm in*] (15). (ii) *Dema Dudan* (The Second Period, between 1937-1955) marks the period in which due to Stalin's oppressive regime all literary and cultural activities had halted (Boyik 17). (iii) *Dema Sîsiyan* (The Third Period, after 1955) is the period in which Soviet Kurdish literature started to gain its true

character, become more "Kurdish" and more interacted with the Kurdish literary and cultural activities in other parts of Kurdistan and in Kurdish diasporas (Reşît 202-203).[187]

According to Uzun, thanks to the Communist understanding of literature that is "national in form, socialist and class-based in content," and Soviet foreign policy that seemed supportive of Kemalism while remaining suspicious of Kurdish causes, Soviet Kurdish literature remained isolated for most of the 20th century (*Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî* 59-60). Despite these factors, however, except for some minor differences in language and stylistic, Soviet Kurdish literature had surprisingly protected its Kurdish quality and remained attached to the language of Kurdistan (Uzun, *Antolojiya Edebiyata Kurdî* 59-60). Allison's analysis of the importance of personal and collective memory in Kurdish literature is helpful for understanding the Kurdishness of Soviet Kurmanji literature. In most of the writings of Soviet Kurdish literature and Kurmanji literature in Turkey and diaspora, the politics of history is embedded in recounting history through personal and collective memory. According to Allison,

> The propensity for the nation-states of the area, especially Turkey, to practise "organized forgetting" as the anthropologist Paul Connerton calls it, clearly leads to an impetus among Kurds to recount history from their point of view as much as possible. This type of work of memory, the anti-*oubli* "lest we forget," or rather "lest nobody else hear about it" type, is found in several forms. ("Kurdish Autobiography, Memoir and Novel" 113)

In another analysis, Allison finds Karin Barber's notion of *instauration* particularly useful for understanding this preoccupation with personal histories, commemorations, and collective memories (Allison, **"**Memory and the Kurmanji Novel" 192). Pointing to the *OED*'s definition of the term as both "institution, founding, establishment" but also

[187] It was also in this period, in 1959, that a Kurdology section was inaugurated in the Institute of Oriental Studies at Armenian Academy of Science and a Kurdish section (*Kurdsky Kabinet*) was founded by Orbeli (1887-1961) within the Institute of Asian Peoples at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Leningrad. For further information regarding Soviet Kurdology, see Leezenberg, "Soviet Kurdology and Kurdish Orientalism" 86-102.

"restoration, renovation, renewal," Barber writes of the human practice to "innovatively establish social forms and attentively maintain them; both the establishment and the maintenance are creative, emergent and continuous. Texts, in this view, are instances of instauration, which are central to human experience (Barber 4). In light of Barber's notions, Allison argues that in the case of Kurdish writers from both Turkey and Soviet Armenia, "a conscious awareness of foundation and establishment is present," since the inherently establishing and institutionalising nature of writing is thought to be passed to the writing and publication of collective or personal memory (**"**Memory and the Kurmanji Novel" 193). Indeed, from this perspective, Kurdish writers' and intellectuals' emphasis on writing in Kurdish no matter what is written and how (remember Metê's story in *Êş*) finds its political resonance. In a politico-historical context in which a Kurdish sovereignty no longer exists and Kurds are denied of a presence in history by the official historiographies of other nation-states, personal recording stands as the only means of re-establishing and restoring Kurdish political and historical presence. For as both Barber and Allison show, writing as a politico-historical strategy or *instauration* is not only an act of reaching out into the past but into the future, too: we were here and we always will be (Allison, **"**Memory and the Kurmanji Novel" 192). We are ready now to turn to our text.

Shemo's *Dimdim* is based on a widely-known old epic commonly called *Xanê Chengzêrin* or *Xanê Lepzêrîn* (Golden-handed Khan),[188] which tells the story of the 1608-1610 uprising of Kurdish regions located in the south and southwestern parts of Lake Urmia, in the Iranian Kurdistan. The centre of the uprising was Castle Dimdim, which

[188] The epic is known among the general Kurdish public by a few different names, *e.g.*, *Dimdim*, *Dimdim Xanê Kurda*, *Beyt'a Xanê Kurda*, *Xanê Çengzêrin*, *Xanê Lepzêrin*, *Xanê Destzêrin* (Celil 33).

was in the Mergever land (Celil 11).[189] As Ordixanê Celil points out, the uprising was recorded by the famed 17th-century court historian Iskandar Beg Munshi, or Iskandar Beg Turkoman, **(**1560/61-1633/34) in his chronicle of the Safavid dynasty *Tarih-i Alamaray-i Abbasi* (The World-Adorning History of Shah Abbas, 1616, 1629) (Celil 11). According to Celil, the first recorded date of the epic—which has inspired many literary works besides Shemo's[190]—was sometime in the second half of the 19th century; it was either written or commissioned by the Russian Consul at Erzurum, Alexander Jaba. The first version of the epic, recorded by Jaba from a Kurdish man from Beyazit (now, Doğubeyazıt), was a four-page long piece of prose published in a selection entitled *Kurdskiye Skazki* (Kurdish Stories) (Celil 36).[191]

It is not clear whether Shemo had heard the epic from a local bard or he had read any of the recorded versions. Regardless, however, there are various important nucleuses of stories in each recorded version that one might expect Shemo to carry to his story, either because they are interesting or because they are politically and ideologically appropriate to Shemo's writing. Yet none of these nucleuses finds a place in Shemo's novel. For instance, as both Celil and Allison point, one of the most important nucleus narrative of the epic, that of the cunning person who outwits the ruler (*i.e.*, a reluctant ruler tells a stranger that she can have as much land as an ox skin can cover, so the cunning stranger slices an ox skin into thin lines and encircles a hill, thus founding a new

[189] Allison gives detailed information on the core story of *Dimdim* and the origin of Golden-handed Khan in her comprehensive introduction to Kurdish oral literature. See Allison, **"**Kurdish Oral Literature" 56-57.

[190] These works include, for instance, poems by Soviet Kurdish writers Heciyê Cindî and Casimê Celil (see Allison, "Kurdish Oral Literature" 60); a story entitled "Şâhîdân-i Qalâ-i Dimdim" (The Martyrs of Castle Dimdim, 1960) by Iraqi-Kurdish writer Mustafa Salih Karim; an novelesque epic written in verse, *Kela Dimdimê* (Castle Dimdim, 1991) by Syrian-Kurdish writer Jan Dost; and a novel written in English by Iraqi-Kurdish writer Yasin Aziz, entitled *Dum Dum Castle* (2014).

[191] Celil lists 8 (two in verse, two in prose, and three in verse-prose mixed) versions of the epic between 1860 and 1960, and states that seven of these versions were published. Allison mentions 10 recorded versions and states that there are also Armenian versions of the epic (**"**Kurdish Oral Literature" 56-57).

settlement[192]) is not included in Shemo's story (Celil 65; Allison, "Kurdish Oral Literature" 57).

The epic evidently inspired Shemo by its vivid and heroic account of the Kurdish resistance against oppressive invaders. True to the historical story that inspired it, Shemo bases *Dimdim* in the end of 16th century and the beginning of 17th, when late-medieval Kurdistan was fragmented by certain fully autonomous distant mountainous regions and semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates. These groups were each enmeshed in a constant tribal rivalry and a dangerously ambiguous double game between the central power of the Ottomans and the Safavids, who in return had established a system of checks and balances against the rival emirates. Indeed, the geopolitical position of Kurdish emirates, as a buffer zone between the Ottoman and the Iranian Empires, enabled them to lean on one of these competing political camps and change their side whenever required. By doing so, many Kurdish tribes and emirates had managed to protect and prolong their independence—trimming their sails to the prevailing winds, today recognising the power of the Sultan, tomorrow that of the Shah. Common peoples, however, had suffered terribly from this dangerous yet profitable game (Lazarev and Mihoyan 95; van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State* 135).

We now turn to the question of how *Dimdim* symbolically corrects the disappointing reality of Kurdish history, *i.e.*, Kurdish failure in founding its own state and consequent historical marginalisation. Shemo materialises his response to this profound historical and political contradiction with a Kurdish utopia founded in the mountains. This utopia in Castle Dimdim, which is marked by social justice, equality, peace, prosperity, freedom, and a humanistic vision, is under the constant threat of despotic and barbarian

[192] This story is also found in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

outsiders, the Iranians and the Ottomans. Against the asymmetries between the armies—the army of one or two Kurdish tribes against an imperial army—and betrayals of some Kurdish *emir*s and tribes who cooperate with the enemies, Kurds demonstrate legendary resistance in solidarity with each other to block the Ottoman and the Savafid assaults. True, Shemo's pinpointing two major historical causes, *viz.*, the lack of unity and treason, for the unsatisfying Kurdish political reality today, is not enough to release Kurdish national pride from the pressure of this colossal politico-historical failure, but it does ease the pain.

As we see below, Shemo's resolution to the Kurdish problem requires him to apply almost every clichéd move and hackneyed strategy of romantic historicism and reactionary nationalism. But to elucidate this point, we need to attend to the text in a broader sense, in the second level in our model. Thus, we first outline the development and characteristics of Kurdish history-writing and point out its main inspirations in the Turkish and diasporic contexts. We then attend to the dialogue between antagonistic historical discourses and identify the principal *ideologeme*s in the text before finally addressing the meaning of *Dimdim* at the social level.

As Gürdal Aksoy points out, with the exception of Sharaf Khan Bidlisî's *Sharafname* (1597), there is not a single attempt to write the history of the Kurds, even in chronicle fashion, until the 20th century (46). Abdurrahman Bedir Khan, a proto-nationalist Kurdish intellectual of the late-19th century and one of the forerunners of Kurdish mass media, noticed this lacuna, and, beginning with the eighth issue of the journal *Kurdistan* (1 December 1898) he incorporated brief articles about the history of Kurdistan and of his ancestors, the *mir*s of Botan, [the Azizan] into each issue (Bozarslan, *Kurdistan Cilt I* 213). From the 11th to 13th issues of *Kurdistan*, Bedir Khan provided introductions to the mirs of Botan, bibliographic notes and anecdotes from their lives. In

the 13th issue, in a vein reminiscent of the historical discourse in *Dimdim*, he implored his Kurdish readers to draw a lesson from the life and deeds of Mir Bedir Khan, the last mir of Botan, whose main goal was to establish a unity against the local state-appointed rulers and officials (Bozarslan, *Kurdistan Cilt I* 267).

Except for Abdurrahman Bedir Khan's fragmentary chronicle of the history of Botan's emirs, the Kurdish intellectuals in the beginning of the 20th century put little effort into writing about Kurdish history or even discussing the need for it, preferring to write articles devoted to the language issue instead. When they did write about the necessity of writing a Kurdish history, it was more for the sake of linguistic purposes than for constituting and publicising knowledge of Kurdish history. Noted Kurdish intellectual Babanzade Ismail Hakkı (1876-1913) expressed this sentiment well in *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi* (Kurdish Journal of Mutual Aid and Progress; December 19, 1908 issue), in an essay entitled "*Kürdçeye Dair*" (On Kurdish Language): "What is needed is first a grammar and dictionary of this language. After that, a history of Kurdish nation should be written" (Bozarslan, *Kürd Teavün Cilt I* 143).

After the Kurdish disappointment of the Second Constitution and the rule of *Ittihad ve Terakki*, as well as the Ottoman failure in the First World War, Kurdish intellectuals deserted their pro-Ottomanist ideas and embraced a more distinctly Kurdish nationalist outlook. In *Jîn*, a highly influential journal of this period (1918-1919), Kurdish writers and their limited Kurdish public started to construct a romantic-nationalist history from the debris of re-invented Kurdish mythologies and legends; examples include articles written by Halil Hayalî Beg (1865-1926) and Memduh Selim (1880?-1976) on *Kawe Ihtilâli* (The Revolution of Kawe), the latter of which was based on the mythological story of Kawe the Blacksmith's fight against the invaders and bringing freedom to Kurdistan. These early examples of history-writing reflect what would

become the principle characteristics of Kurdish history-writing: a reactionary spirit and a preoccupation with the language issue.

The first attempts of history-writing by Kurdish intellectuals were all somewhat rudimentary, rarely needing any scientific proofs or references to base their arguments. In the third issue of *Jîn*, on November 21, 1918, for example in a piece written by the editorial board entitled "*Necmettin Bey'e Cevabımız*" (Our Response to Necmettin Beg), the board defends itself against Necmettin Beg's (probably a reader) criticism of their writings of history, for not being scientific enough when compared to those of Europeans. The board admitted that their history-writing was indeed primitive but maintained that it was a necessary starting point and "could serve as a firm ground for any sort of political thought." Then they continued: "Let us not forget that one could enter the assembly of nations only if one holds a history [book] in one hand and a dictionary in the other" (Bozarslan, *Jîn Cilt I* 251).

After these discussions in the first quarter of the 20th century, apart from some episodic publications mostly in bilingual (Kurmanji and Turkish) magazines by Kurdish scholars and activists following the 1960 and the 1971 coups,[193] nothing concerning Kurdish history was produced and published in Turkey. In fact, history has always been one of the least popular subjects in Kurdish publishing world in Turkey. According to Malmisanij, of 654 books written in Kurdish (Kurmanji and Zazaki dialects both) and published in Turkey and in the diaspora, only 11 were history books, compared to the 174 poetry books and 134 novels and story collections. The same trend is observable in

[193] These were *Dicle-Fırat* (1962-63), *Deng* (1963), *Dengê Taze* (1966), *Rizgarî* (1976), *Roja Welat* (1977), and *Tîrêj* (1980). None of them lasted more than two years, and after only a couple of issues they were all banned.

translation: compared to 22 poetry books, there were only 2 history books translated from other languages (Malmisanij, *The Past and Present* 23).

Far more damaging than this dearth of scholarly interest and publication, however, was the Republican era's prohibition and censorship. Its disturbing influence could be observed even today in the reactionary and monopolistic historical discourse of Kurdish history books, particularly those written in Turkish.[194] This approach inserts an Arian version of ethno-genesis into the *Türk Tarih Tezi* (Turkish History Thesis), and the Kurds, with all their ethnic purity, are asserted as the most ancient autochthonous people of Mesopotamia and their homeland Kurdistan—with no mention of other autochthonous peoples of these regions (Hirschler 152). This approach also emphasizes an ethno-national dichotomy of civilised *versus* barbaric. Listing numerous civilisational services that Kurdish people have done throughout history (until the invasion of Kurdish lands by barbaric outsiders, *viz.*, Turks, Persians, and Arabs), in this history-writing, ancient Kurds are credited with this or that invention or advancement in the history of civilisation (Hirschler 155). Dr Cemşit Bender (1927-2008), for example, after listing many inventions and major civilisational steps, states that: "There are the hard work and sweat of brows of Kurdish peoples behind all these. Is it easy to be the first in all and everything? We wrote this book to disentomb the truth about this thousands of years old civilisation and bring it to light" (Bender 11). What is stated to be the objective of Bender's work, however, is even more interesting than his long list of inventions: "The revelation of what Kurdish peoples had put forward in the field of civilisation will consolidate the love,

[194] The most pronounced examples of these works are Cemşit Bender's *Kürt Tarihi ve Uygarlığı* (Kurdish History and Civilisation, 1991), Selahaddin Mihotuli's *Arya Uygarlıklarından Kürtlere* (From the Arian Civilisations to the Kurds, 1992), and Mehmet Kemal Işık's, alias Tori's, *Kürtlerin İlkçağ Tarihi ve Kültürü* (Ancient History and Culture of the Kurds, 1997).

respect, and brotherhood between the Turks and the Kurds. This is our conviction. The affinity between the two peoples is bound to their knowing one another" (11-12).

This ethnocentric approach to history-writing bears some resemblance to the Turkish History Thesis. Mihotuli's history, for instance, claims that "the cultural and civilisational products that have been known to be Arabic, Persian, Greek, Rome, Byzantine, and Turkish are actually Arian-Kurdish patented," and that at the heart of European civilisation is in fact "a land called Arian with its centre Zagros Mountains" (cited in Ayhan 81-82). Remember, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt and Afet İnan, likewise, gave papers during the First Turkish History Congress claiming that while "[European] people were living in tree holes and caves…Turks in Central Asia had long created the civilisation of timber and metal, tamed animals and started farming" (cited in Ersanlı 140). Turkish children, Bozkurt and İnan wrote, "know and will make it known that they are not ascendants of a tribe of 400 tents [an allusion to the Ottomans] but of a nation with highest capacity that comes from a superior race which is thousands of years old, Arian, and civilised" (cited in Ersanlı 152).

The affinity between these civilisational discourses—both Turkish and Kurdish versions—does not need any further analysis. Of course, the Turks and the Kurds are neither the first nor the last peoples to put forward such romantic-nationalist, monopolist and teleological claims in the process of constructing a national history. However, in the present case, the Kurdish historical-writing was mimicking of what it actually meant to respond to, *viz.*, the Turkish History Thesis (van Bruinessen, "The Kurds" 60-61). It is rife with the same contradictions, claiming paradoxically to be the best warriors and the most civilised and peaceful people at the same time; establishing a humanistic, inclusive, pluralist, and equality-based civilisation yet losing it; and being extremely populist, aiming at flattering peoples' pride, yet remaining scientific, too, *etc.* Further, it is

produced by reactionary dilettantes who, rather than providing properly scientific references, made general convictions or copied and pasted information and statements (Aksoy 61). In this kind of history-writing, which is actually a very old method that Robin George Collingwood calls *scissors-and-paste* history, the historian hunts for favourable and appealing testimonies of different authorities to excerpt, combine, and incorporate into his own history-writing while omitting all undesirable and inconvenient facts (258).

Besides this copy-and-paste approach to historical fact, two other thematic strands dominate Kurdish history-writing: the insider-outsider dichotomy and the subordinate and multi-referential nature of politico-historical discourse. The former is a specific kind of civilisational discourse in which the dichotomy between the civilised self and barbaric other is reconfigured in the context of subjugated peoples, such as Kurds: the barbaric outsider invades the lands of civilised insider and history stops moving forward. Kurdish history indeed, moves in circles, as Shemo's epilogue at the end of *Dimdim* poignantly portrays. The second strand concerns the fact that the Kurdish historical discourse is not directly aimed at what could be called the *master references* of civilisational discourse, *viz.,* Europeans and the West, but rather to those who were themselves responding to this master reference, namely, the Turks. As it was in the case of orientalism (the Kurds were orientalised by the Turks who were already orientalised by the West) and modernism (likewise, Kurdish modernism was second-hand and mediated), in the case of historical discourse, too, the Kurds were at the *subordinate periphery*, striking back at the periphery which was itself trying to strike back at the centre.

In *Dimdim*, this inside/outside dialectic of civilisational discourse enables Shemo to moderate the overwhelming outcome of the Kurdish historical failure that is dominance by others. In fact, Shemo's desperate search for a realistic exit from this crushing historical truth turns the novel into a battleground between historical accuracy and

national pride.[195] Shemo diligently postponing the catastrophic end, has Castle Dimdim win five battles against the Ottomans and the Iranians, devastating the outsiders five consecutive times before eventually losing. Shemo's exit from overwhelming historical reality is, in other words, creating the most majestic resistance ever. In the lack of a state of their own, Kurds find consolation in the magnitude of their resistance. In brevity, this historical discourse (i) is grounded on a firm civilisational discourse and an insider/outsider binarism, (ii) configures the state as the ultimate culmination of historical development, and (iii) approaches history as a repository of lessons and consolations rather than of facts.

Dimdim, indeed, is a historical lesson with numerous political messages: Disloyalty and disunity are the primal faults of Kurdish history and the main reasons for foreign hegemony, unity is the only way to acquire a full Kurdish independence, resistance and death is more honourable than living under foreign dominance, and so forth. These messages are repeated constantly, in fact, more than 50 times throughout *Dimdim*. At the core of these messages, there is always the recursive nucleus term, unity. This term is also the nucleus of the Kurdish politico-historical context and the principle *ideologeme* of *Dimdim*.[196]

In what remains I will examine *Dimdim* in the larger context of history and attempt to reveal the universal meaning of the text. Thus, as required by the model, I centre my analysis on the formal and generic features of *Dimdim*, which is a remarkably disjointed

[195] Not to mention some contradictions at the manifest level, like the one at the end of the novel where, although the reader is informed multiple times that the food supply in the castle has run out and the people are on the verge of starvation, the Iranian army enters the ruin of the castle and are startled to see the castle's prosperousness, rich food reservoirs, and full storehouses. Shemo, obviously could not abstain from impressing the Iranian army even with the ruin of his utopia.

[196] This is also seen in Dost's *Kela Dimdimê*, which repeatedly compares life under Ottoman and Iranian rule to slavery, stressing that from ancient times on, Kurds have lived freely (19, 85, 105, 111, 135). Dost particularly highlights the theme of unity throughout the epic.

novel. In even the shortest episode of the book, "Çêkirina Meçîtê" (The Construction of Masjid) which lasts about 5 pages the topic shifts more than 10 times. The story develops erratically, with swift changes in topics, abrupt narrative jumps, digressions and inconsistencies. This already disruptive character of the text is exacerbated by the laconic and oral character of the narrative, as exemplified in the following passage:

> The male population of the castle, when they heard Mele Reşît's azan in this morning, grabbed their pitcher and headed for the masjid. At the same moment, Xano, together with a couple of servants around him, was also heading for the masjid. When the group saw that it was Xano, they let him go first. It must be said, all people of Beroderan community like Xano; such a brave, such a true and compassionate man. Xano went through the masjid in front of them. Xano went to the fountain, which was in the courtyard of the masjid, to perform an ablution. There were many spouts, warm water swishing from top to the bottom. The place for praying was a distinct place. It has been more than two years now that the masjid was built yet there was no imam so no pray was performed. (34-35)[197]

Note that all awkward and infelicitous usages of language are found in the original Kurmanji version, too. At many points, it is easily sensed that the narrative is told or recited rather than written, as with the sentence "It must be said, all people of Beroderan community like Xano; such a brave, such a true and compassionate man" (34). These sorts of residues of orality are abundant in *Dimdim*. A very clear example appears when the narrator introduces Şebab's sister Nenê for the second time, despite the fact that he has already told a full episode with Nenê and she is properly introduced (146).

Despite this spontaneity and the lack of systematicity, however, *Dimdim* is also very schematic and predictable thanks to its repeated nucleus narrative, recursive and formulaic narration, and narrative patterns. Many themes and motifs are repeated

[197] Ehlê kelê yê mêr, hema ku vê sibehê bihîstin dengê Mele Reşît, misînên xwe hildan û ber bi meçîtê çûn. Wê gave, Xano jî bi çend xulamên li dorê ve ber bi meçîtê dihat. Cimaetê ku dît Xano ye, xwe dan aliyekî, rê dan wî, wekî pêşî ew here meçîtê. Divê bê gotin, cimaeta Beroderan gişan ji Xano hez dikir, çawa mêrxas, çawa mirovekî rast û birehm. Xano beriya gişan derbas bû, çû meçîtê. Çû ser kaniya ka-rêzkerî, ya ku anîbûn heyata meçîtê, jibo destnimêjê. Çend çaviyên wê hebûn, xulexula ava sar bû ji jorê de dihate xwarê. Ciyê ku wî lê nimêj dikir cuda bû. Ew ji du salan zêdetir bû meçît hatibû avakirin, lê mele tunebû, tê de nimêj nedibû.

numerous times. Even the type of persona is limited to three *actant*s: the resistant and fighter Kurd, the traitor Kurd, and the attacker and invader other. Beyond such minor sets of formula, there are eight major recursive formulaic narrative elements in *Dimdim* that are dispersed throughout the text in a non-systematic manner: (i) the description of season or day, (ii) the description of utopic qualities of *Dimdim* and its society, (iii) the description of various Kurdish customs, rituals, and traditions, (iv) the oppression and attacks of the Ottomans and the Safavids on Kurds, (v) the victory of unified and brave Kurds against their enemies, (vi) the importance of unity, and the danger and harm of disunity and betrayal, (vii) the manipulation of religion by the Ottomans and the Safavids against the Kurds, and (viii) pieces of poems, and epic and poetic summaries.

Dimdim's callow narrative, no doubt, was partly due to the novelty of modern prose in Kurmanji literature. In fact, just like Shemo's other novels and many other works of Soviet Kurdish literature, the narrative is essentially oral and folkloric, hasty, conversational, laconic, scratchy, and spontaneous. The narrative that alternatives helter-skelter between traditional narrative techniques and modern forms could be attributed to the lack of experience in prosaic fictional writing. Note the narrative reliance on verse (10 pieces of folk songs, 69 verses in total), in many points, for explaining and manipulating emotions and summarising the situation. Even the moral of the story is given at the end of the novel in a poem: "All Kurds should know/As long as traitors are found among them/ They will always be with no land and no home/ They will always be destitute/ They will always be dominated…" (248).[198]

To sum up, Shemo's *Dimdim* shows an indecisive and indeterminate transitory narrative that seesaws between orality and literacy, epic fantasy and historical reality,

[198] Bila hemû Kurd bizanibin / Heke xayîn di nava wan de peyda bin / Ew ê her gav bê erd û bê war bin / Her gav jî stûxwar bin / Wê di binê destan de bin…

romance and tragedy. Dimdim attends to none of these narrative strands and qualities fully. A love story, between Şebab and Dîlan's of Castle Dimdim, for example, remains unfinished; the narrator simply forgets about lovers after a point. What is expected to turn into a proper romance, therefore, just vanishes with no reason. The function of this scratchy love story, is perhaps symbolising, though very loosely and ambiguously, the failed state formation. Recall that in *Devlet Ana* and in *Osmancık*, as well as in many historical novels, the unification of lovers points symbolically to the foundation of the state. Thus, Şebab and Dîlan's fragmentary and sketchy love symbolically fits the situation of Kurds perfectly: no unification, no state.

In Helîm Yûsiv's novel, *Tirsa bê Diran* (The Toothless Fear, 2006) one of the most refined examples of Kurdish novels, the hero Mûsa, a Kurdish young man who teaches history at schools, is obsessed with the fragmentation of Kurdistan into four pieces by the 1916 Sykes and Picot Agreement between Britain and France. Mûsa sees Sykes and Picot as the relentless and reckless architects of Kurdish destitute and suffering. He desperately tries to rewind the history and undo the agreement that divided Kurdistan and Kurdish existence into four pieces. In a way, the whole novel is a fight against history and its imposing reality. Mûsa's obsession leads to schizophrenic visions in which he debates with Sykes and Picot, blaming them for causing millions of deaths and suffering, all for the benefits of their countries. Fleeing from Syria, which he defines as "the four-cornered homeland of fear," to Germany, Mûsa thinks he can finally be free. When German authorities decide to send him back he runs away to England, where he is arrested for attacking a man named Sykes in the street. He eventually loses against history:

> He was feeling that history was slowly tightening around his neck like an iron circle. His head was throbbing with pain as if it was going to explode. To escape from the heavy burden of history, to live in his own time, in the period he was in, he wanted to throw away all the agreements, all major historical events from his memory in one move, as easy as falling off a log.

> He also wanted to live like other millions of people who were adjusted to living in their own time. (122-23)[199]

In a scene in the novel, Mûsa puts all history books he has into a sack and burns them, which gives him extreme relief, bliss, and emancipation:

> History was burning, giving me pleasure. All consensuses and agreements between states were burning. All lies and meaningless conflicts were burning. The names of kings, leaders, generals were burning. All treasons, splittings [of lands], cold victories, and bloody defeats were burning. (100)[200]

This is where we capture the true meaning of history for Shemo, too. In a way, in *Dimdim*, Shemo tries to burn that history with all its imposing bitter truths. His fight against historical reality is very much similar to Mûsa's fight. A majestic history of resistance is consolatory, yet history centres on victories and states. In this vein, Xano's blowing up the castle in *Dimdim* and Mûsa's burning history books in *Tirsa bê Diran* are the same response to the historical reality. Put differently, until there is a complete and unified Kurdish independence, history will continue to hurt Kurds.

III. Conclusion: History as a Political Story

Reviewing it as a composition of epistemology, methodology and ideology, Keith Jenkins defines history as

> a shifting, problematic discourse, ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past, that is produced by a group of present-minded workers (overwhelmingly in our culture salaried historians) who go about their work in mutually recognisable ways that are epistemologically, methodologically, ideologically and practically positioned and whose products, once in circulation, are subject to a series of uses and abuses that are logically infinite but which in actuality generally correspond to a range of power bases that exist at any given moment and which structure and

[199] Mûsa hîs dikir ku dîrok toqeke hesinî ye û li dora sere wî geriyaye û hêdî hêdî lê teng dibe û tê hev. Serê wî dihat ku biteqe. Dixwest xwe ji bin barê dîrokê derxîne. Dixwest hemu peyman û bûyerên dîrokî, mina tayê ku tu ji nav hevîr derxînî, weha bi yek derbê ji bîrmendiya xwe bikşîne û wan dûr bavêje, da ku kariba di roja xwe de bijî. Wî dixwest mina van milyonên kesên ku li gora dema xwe hatine iyarkirin, bijî.

[200] Dîrok bi kêfxweşî dişewitî. Peyman û lihevhatinên hêz û dewletan dişewitîn. Derew û xirecira bêwate dişewitî. Navên qral, serok, padîşah û generalan dişewitî. Bêbextî, dabeşkirin, serkeftinên sar û têkçûnên xwînî dişewitîn.

> distribute the meanings of histories along a dominant-marginal spectrum. (*Re-thinking History* 26)

There is much food for thought in this passage, but suffice it to say, though not historians as such, it captures the spirit of Tahir's and Shemo's approaches to history quite well. Both took up the topic of history to address some contemporary socio-political questions and concerns and both used history to draw relevant political messages for their societies' present situation and future possibilities.[201] By showing people how they used to be, it aimed to motivate people to throw the debris of failure and feelings of inferiority and throw themselves into more promising futures: we once used to be great, we could be again.

History, for both writers, is identical with civilisation and power, which is intrinsically connected to the state. Thus, written from different points of a dominant-marginal spectrum, both *Devlet Ana* and *Dimdim* are configured as histories of power—victories or great resistances that are configured through a historical discourse of civilisational and ethical superiorities. The historical discourses in both novels are, furthermore, reactionary, romantic-nationalist, and monopolistic, which could be attributed to the relationship between the respective historiographies that shaped them.

A major difference appears between the two in the ethical and psychological aspects and ramifications of their writings. Tahir's *Devlet Ana*, is radically and blatantly aggressive, exclusivist, misogynistic, androcentric, xenophobic, patronising, and ostentatiously and vulgarly morbid. Shemo's *Dimdim*, on the other hand, is a relatively moderate text. Shemo is probably one of the most modest writers ever took the pen. Finding theoretical solutions for deep-rooted socio-political and historical questions, as Tahir did, had probably never occurred to him. True, he knew that disunity was the

[201] This is actually a very common quality in all history-writings. Drawing on Croce, and underlying the fact that history based essentially on seeing the past through the eyes of the present and in the light of its problems, Edward Carr points that "all history is in a way 'contemporary history'" (20-21).

principal cause for the Kurdish political fragmentation and historical conundrum, but this is, in a way, a politico-historical code imprinted in the Kurdish imagination; it hardly needs a discovery.

As Emre maintains, Tahir's approach to the Ottoman state, in *Devlet Ana* and elsewhere, is biased, promotional, and sublimating; he never speaks of the cruelty, internal contradictions, expansionist politics, and states' not-so-equalitarian approach to the other religious and ethnic groups (95). Being as he was a fanatic adherent to the power of the state, these characteristics of the state contradicts Tahir's notion of *kerim devlet* (Emre 95). Indeed, this approach to the state mechanism that conventionalises and legitimates cruelty, evil, and malice leads to delusions and renders all those struggles against state cruelty and oppression meaningless (Emre 95). Notably, although Tahir spent around 13 years in prison on charges that were not only baseless and whimsical but also had the very common stamp of arbitrariness of state autocracy in Turkey, Tahir never displayed any contempt for the Turkish state.

In *Dimdim*, it is obvious that Shemo also sees history as the history of power. Despite the emphasis on the resistance and the struggle of periphery against the centre, in the last analysis, reminiscent of Tahir's desperate need to respond to the centre of his politico-historical outlook, that is the West, Shemo, too, is engaged in a parallel dialogue with the respective centre of his outlook, Turks and Persians. Neither dialogue was attended by the interlocutor centres; it was neither Shemo's nor Tahir's priority to create a proper heteroglossic platform where antagonistic historical discourses could converse with one another. Thus *Dimdim* fails in being a history from below, a peoples' history, for it shows all traits and has all claims of central histories. Tahir on the other hand, despite some minuscule conciliatory gestures towards warrior women (who are patriarchist, violent, men-like, and sexless, such as Devlet Hatun), Anatolian Christians

and Armenians (who are willing to cooperate with, work for, or follow the Ottomans), is least interested in telling history from below. *Tahiresque* history is absolutely in and for power.

Driven and controlled by an inferiority complex and intellectual deficiencies, despite his allegedly Marxist framing, Tahir hardly goes beyond an ethical binarism in which absolute good or evil racial and civilisational nature determines all. In other words, in Tahir, history is mortified by an eristic and self-righteous ethics. Though tuned much more moderately, Shemo's outlook, too, is framed by an ethical binarism, with all the good inherently attributed to the insider and the evil to the outsider. The reactive and yet heavily imitative nature of the Kurdish historiography, as well as the strong Kemalist influence explain such an outlook. Like Tahir, Shemo, too, wrote under the pressure caused by the imbalance between two different commitments: one to his ideology and the other to historical reality. There is one important difference though: Tahir's novel could be likened to a gigantic cry for more power, for occupying the central position in global power distribution once again, whereas Shemo's is a moderate cry for a unified Kurdish state. However different is the scale and scope of the political imaginations and claims, both sought an antidote in the authority of history for their wounded national pride.

CONCLUSION

POLITICS, LITERATURE, AND DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY

To resort to a metaphor drawn from mythology, the question of democracy and Kurdish conflict has long become a Tantalusian condition. It seems like good people of Turkey are doomed for eternity to stand chin deep in that pool of democracy, whilst a thousand branches of freedom, peace, and equal rights hang over their heads. Hungry and thirsty as ever, they constantly try to reach for a branch to get some fruit or bent down to drink a sip of water, yet every time they try, those branches are blown away and the water recedes out of their reach. Good people of Turkey who believe in equal rights for every citizen regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, or class; good people who believe in democracy, freedom of speech, rule of law, and peace seemed to be doomed to an everlasting tease. In this dissertation, I tried to understand and reveal the structures, mind-sets, and social and politico-historical conditions and reasons that bring about this deprivation.

Through the investigation of four main themes and problematics which I take as the most prominent either in both the Kurdish or Turkish literary institutions or in one of them, I have tried to map the means, reasons and outcomes of the politicisation of literary works and the ebb and flow of Turkish and Kurdish politics *vis-à-vis* the Kurdish imbroglio and the general question of democracy in Turkey. To my surprise, the ordeal of the Kurdish question and democratisation, as literary texts have shown us, was as much caused by antagonism, rival nationalisms, hostile ideological positions, and the like as by congruity, parallel political visions, and similar power structures. As the chapters on the politics of love, language, religion, and history show, profound ideological rivalry and antagonism do not necessarily mean divergent political structures and mind-sets. Behind the apparent and the tangible struggles, antagonisms, and animosities there lie latent

reproduced models, resemblances, and parallelisms. Turkish Islamists and secularists, Kurdish and Turkish nationalists, Kemalist-conservative ideologues and Marxist-revolutionist writers and so forth could develop the same univocal, homogenous, militarist, chauvinist, misogynist, patriarchist, and anti-democratic standings while conflicting over distinct interests, stakes, and ideals.

To summarize my main contentions following the same steps of investigation, in the first chapter, Metê's text opened discussions on the politics of language, the boundaries and definition of Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions, and the politicisation of language. Through the analysis of *Êş*, I showed how the language of literature could become a political question in itself in the Kurdish literary institution thanks to the linguistic assimilation Kurdish society has been exposed to in Turkey and the Kurdish intelligentsia's reactive and defensive cultural nationalism and language politics. Here, it turns out that Turkey's Kurdish language policy not only destroyed public expression of the Kurdish language and culture by a series of draconian law and regulations, delaying the development of modern Kurdish literature by decades, it also shaped the Kurdish intellectual and political mind in respect to the language issue. Thanks to the Kemalist and Turkish-nationalist invasion of Kurdish political thought, the majority of Kurdish writers and scholars we have seen in this chapter understand the language question within the box of unity, homogeneity, ethical and national obligation, a mere identity marker, the sole condition of differentiation and autonomy, and the like. The reproducing and degenerating capacity of Republican thought and its legacy is indeed quite remarkable. This legacy, as we have seen through discussions of the Turkish and Kurdish languages, not only sacrificed the freedom of expression, linguistic rights, and democracy to homogeneity, integrity, and authority, but also blocked the potential of both literary institutions. Instead of moving on to new frontiers, finding new synthesis, or

discovering new potentialities, the Kurdish literary institution, too, seems to have fixed its eye on producing a heavy-handed and stateless version of its Turkish model.

Despite existing references to minor literatures and post-colonial contexts, the overarching frame of nationalism seems to limit the vision of Kurdish writers when approaching the language question. Metê's story suggested that a transformative politics of language in Turkey is only attainable when language is freed from national, ethical and political dichotomies. Thus, instead of reviewing the Kurdish and Turkish literatures in Turkey as distinctly defined and bordered national minefields, I propose to see them and all other related literary institutions inside and outside of Turkey as multiple institutions or circles of literatures which are linked, forming a concentric Borromean knot that suggest not only a perfection of balanced circularity and interconnection, but also the impossibility of full disengagement. The centre, true, is the more established, more powerful, and more recognised Turkish literary institution but it is certainly not monolithic, fixed, or isolated; on the contrary, it is composed of various national, ethnic, religious, and socio-cultural contributions.

In the second chapter, the analyses of the politics of love and the politicisation of inter-ethnic love through Uzun's and Karakurt's novels highlighted a deep vulnerability built into the structure of Kurdish politics. As in many other resistance-oriented and post-colonial contexts, these novels tend to duplicate the same gender dichotomies and injustices on which the oppressive regimes and hegemonies are established. Uzun's text, along with many others from both the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions, shows that the transformative power of love is not so convincingly realised when hegemonic gender politics is not sufficiently deconstructed.

Hundreds of writers throughout history have imagined finding solutions for otherwise insurmountable social, political, and historical conflicts in the transformative power of love. Yet power relations are everywhere and, as such, are not confined to the traditional domains of politics but embedded in love, too. Thus, without a transformative critique of power, there could be no true transformative love. Uzun's attempt to respond to and resolve the persistent socio-cultural, political, historical, and ethno-national conflicts by creating a reconciliatory love story between antagonistic forces while tuning in with the same power configurations between genders, therefore, turns into a sanguine and naive act at best. This chapter on Uzun and Karakurt teaches us that ethno-national conflicts, the Kurdish question and other problems of democracy are as much embedded in ideological and nationalist hostilities and politics as in gender inequalities. Put differently, it is the same patriarchal, anti-democratic, misogynist, authoritarian, militarist, and xenophobic structures that produce the Kurdish question and woman question. Without properly deconstructing one, it is impossible to solve the other. There will be no end to one while the other remains a problem.

Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* and my analysis of politics of religion in Turkey, on the other hand, posited a continuum between Kemalist and Islamist thoughts. *Snow* showed us how, despite all conflicts and antagonisms, these two ideological and political forces actually have been riding in the same carriage of authoritarianism and social engineering. Here, too, it was the woman question, as well as the question of Westernisation, that helped reveal this mutual political creed. Despite all its adherence to progress, rationalism, Westernisation, and secularism, *Snow* revealed the patriarchal, androcentric, and anti-woman legacy in Kemalist and Republican thought. Together with the chapter on politics of history and the analysis of Tahir's novel, this chapter mapped out how the deep-established and overarching frameworks of Western-phobia, nationalist paranoia,

misogyny, xenophobia, inferiority complex, and the conviction of national, moral and religious supremacy pervade the Turkish-Islamist mind. Although the secular *versus* Islamist conflict seems to have become obsolete in Turkey as of the second decade of the 21st century, it should be noted that nothing has actually been fully resolved. All the reasons, issues, and ramifications of politics of religion, *viz.*, the headscarf issue, secularisation, and the like, were linked to religious and human rights; nothing has actually been legally and constitutionally achieved in that department yet. Sweeping all socio-cultural, economical, and political issues of a somewhat more complicated nature under the rug of complacency is a deep-seated political and intellectual custom in Turkey, and it seems like the question of religious rights, too, received the same treatment.

The Kurdish front of the politics of religion is not any quieter or less controversial than the Turkish one. Although compared to the majority of Turkish-Islamists a considerable part of Kurdish-Islamist circles are more accommodating, democratic and pluralist, nonetheless the same frame of mind that is Western-phobic, anti-women's equality and liberty, and Muslim supremacist is present there, too. Also present in the Kurdish Islamist context is a strong criticism of the rise of chauvinist Islamism among Turkish religious circles. According to them, the AKP and other Turkish religious actors and parties used the Kurdish question to level a criticism against Kemalist secularism, since it allegedly divided the Muslim brotherhood of Turks and Kurds. In the end, though, Turkish Islamists, too, sold the Kurdish cultural rights for the rewards of power consolidation, the protection of the *status quo*, and Turkish nationalist ideals.

The politics of religion in the Kurdish context has undergone some important changes over the last two decades. To Turkish-Islamist chagrin, the Kurdish movement and politics started to embrace Muslim identity and question the appropriateness of the Marxist-secularist outlook for a quite conservatively Islamic Kurdish society. A

previously unspoken Kurdish attempt to attain the same legitimacy that the Palestinian resistance has been enjoying in the Muslim world has become more and more visible in the Kurdish critique of Turkish-Islamist thought and politics. Yet, despite all these developments in the realm of politics, Kurdish writers have not shown much interest in the politics of religion. This, I argue, is resulted by the fact that the ultimate objective of the Kurdish literary institution is still to express its difference and autonomy from the Turkish institution, and religion does not appear to be as useful of a domain to register Kurdishness as language is.

In the last chapter, in which I explore the meaning and use of history and its politicisation in the Kurdish and Turkish literary institutions through two texts of national genesis by Shemo and Tahir, the Kemalist and Republican legacy once again comes to the fore. Through the discussions that *Dimdim* and *Devlet Ana* opened in terms of the politics of history, it soon became clear that the same reactionary, monolithic, and defensive understanding of history and historiography is present in both Turkish and Kurdish literary institutions. The texts and their interpretation and circulation in the relevant institutions proved that Turkish and Kurdish imagination of history, although they have functioned in quite different ways and brought about different ends, nevertheless, have been very similar, thanks to the influence of Kemalist historical thought and its understanding of history. Although a younger generation of Turkish and Kurdish scholars have started to challenge this overarching outlook, questioning the offending actors of history rather than seeking consolation and national pride in it, the dominant vision of history is still an ultimately nationalist one in both contexts.

History for both the Kurdish and Turkish political and intellectual actors, as well as writers, is still the history of the nation, a deposit of national glory and power. No history is worth remembering unless it supplies the nation with glory, victory, and power.

Although in the Kurdish case, in which history seems to hurt much more, history is seen as a domain of registered national lessons for Kurds, *i.e.*, to unite against the enemy and end the ordeal of division and fragmentation, still, national glorification is the main reason for visiting history. In both literary institutions, visiting history is primarily a political act, and history is an accessible repository of the national past in which various sources of national pride, moral lectures, messages for future generations, and the historic account of power relations are stored. Behind all attempts to attain a documentary verisimilitude that create and describe history or a given historical stage as it really was, behind all claims to accuracy, rationality, and historical truth, this chapter has shown us that there is a profound nationalist desire for power. Thus, history and historical novels in both contexts turn into a battlefield between national desires and historical truths. This chapter, along with the preceding one, also reveals the master referents, *viz.*, the overarching frames that the society and intellectual and political actors understand, view, measure, review, and compare themselves, for both Turks and Kurds: the Western for the former and the Turkish for the latter.

Yet the literary texts we analysed throughout this dissertation carry much more than these narrowly and locally political and social meanings. True, many pivotal premises that the stories, socio-symbolic messages, and politico-historical arguments are built on are decidedly domestic, but there is also a universal and ahistorical dimension to these texts. Darîn's story, for instance, in the last resort, repeats one of the most ancient and ubiquitous themes, obligation *versus* freedom, or collective responsibility *versus* individual desire. This is not so different from dilemmas that other heroes and heroines from various literatures of the world have been facing throughout the history and universe. Doctor Zhivago, I am sure, would have understood Darîn more than anyone. Likewise, Mûsa from *Tirsa bê Diran* would surely shake his head approvingly when

Stephen Dedalus from *Ulysses* said that history was a nightmare from which he was trying to awake. The same applies to all other texts analysed. With these universal and ahistorical dimensions we also discover that Jameson's own theory of political unconscious, in which literary texts are opened to multi-layered interpretations of concentric frameworks, actually is itself a meta-critical project against Jameson's notorious later article that suggested that all so-called Third World literatures are decidedly social allegories. In this vein, I hope that this research will contribute to the efforts to overcome the taboo against Jamesonian model because of this infamous argument.

Finally, a few notes on the main problems embedded in and the future projections for the two literary institutions is in order. One of the primary issues, which has become prominent by the works of scholars like Andreas Tietze (1991) and Laurent Mignon (2003 and 2005), is the overlooked role and importance of the writings of other minority authors, specifically in the rise of the modern Turkish literature, and generally in the construction of Turkish literary historiography. In other words, a nationalist tendency to base all definitions and boundaries on Turkic values and characteristics has long dominated Turkish literary studies in Turkey, and in this outlook no place or role is attributed to non-Muslim and non-Turkish writers. In connection with this problem, there exists also an elitist outlook to the field, in which particularly literary productions of popular culture, marginal examples, and works of non-secular/Turkish/Kemalist/male writers have been outcast. The same outlook has rendered political fiction, or novels of ideas, less valuable and less literary by definition.

A second problem that has haunted literary discussions every now and then is the question of the authenticity of the Turkish novel. Many Turkish scholars, among them Kemal Tahir, questioned the Turkishness of novels' characters and the Turkish novel in

general, stating that the novel genre in Turkey never stopped imitating the Western model, thus never became quite itself. Listing many authentically Turkish characters, Moran argued that such arguments are inaccurate and simplistic generalisations (179). It is obvious that both the question of definitions and borders and that of authenticity are profoundly related to the pre-eminence of a nationalist outlook in the Turkish literary. Different ideological circles and nationalisms have been constructing their own literary canons and historiographies *vis-à-vis* shifting power relations, yet no truly liberal and democratic approach free of ethnic, religious, genderal, and linguistic qualities has gained that privilege so far. In the past, for decades, many aesthetically highly valuable literary works by Islamic writers like Rasim Özdenören (b.1940), Mustafa Kutlu (b.1947), and Sadık Yalsızuçanlar (b.1962), and many others were ignored due simply to the writers' ideological and political positioning. Today, these writers are finally attracting the attendance their works deserve, thanks to the dominance of an Islamist party and its influence on literary and educational realms. Yet marginal Islamic authors who have levelled strong criticisms within their own religious circles, like Halime Toros (b.1960) and Mehmet Efe (b.1969), remain as outcasts. In Franco Moretti's felicitous metaphor, literary histories and canons continue to be slaughterhouses of literature (30).

Another important question concerns the readership. As Celia Kerslake dwells on in the beginning of her brief yet insightful article "New Directions in the Turkish Novel," despite the complete gamut of benefits the Turkish literary institution has enjoyed simply because it has a state and relevant institutions in its support, Turkish readership remains remarkably small when compared to those national literary institutions in Europe and the North America (99). Even more important than this, however, is the fact that the books that achieve a relatively large readership are generally either non-literary best-sellers, mostly spiritual books or ultra-nationalist epics, *e.g.*, Turgut Özakman's *Şu Çılgın Türkler*

(Those Crazy Turks, 2005), or literary works with very limited artistic concern and of little aesthetic value. According to "The Top-Earning Authors List" published in *Forbes Turkey*'s May 2015 issue, Uğur Koşar's books on spiritual transformation were the most sold and read books in 2014, earning TL 1.7 million ($662,445) and selling 757,000 copies in total (Turan 1-2). Novelists that have become regular names on such lists, such as Ayşe Kulin (b.1941), Zülfü Livaneli (b.1946), Ahmet Ümit (b.1960), and Elif Şafak (b.1971), also made it to the list, yet even for these writers the selling figures rarely exceed 200,000 copies in a country of 80 million people.[202] The number of new titles reached 50,000 in the same year; however, the share of literature among cultural publications stood at only 12 per cent and 4.7 per cent overall, the most popular area of publication being education (mostly textbooks, school books and exam-preparation books) at 51 per cent of the total market.[203]

None of these, however, hold as much sway as ever worsening press and publication-control, censorship, and oppression do. The Turkish literary institution tries to operate under strict pressure and control by the state and government, with all its key elements, writers, translators, publishers, publishing houses, journals, bookstores, and the like constantly being attacked, convicted, imprisoned, and shut down. According to the last *Report on Freedom of Publication* (June 2016-June 2017) [*Yayınlama Özgürlüğü Raporu 2017*] and previous reports by the Turkish Publishers Association, over the past

[202] Publishing houses are forced to adopt morally controversial marketing strategies in order to meet publishing expenses and to ameliorate the impact of value-added-tax on books. According to reports of the Turkish Publishers Association [Türkiye Yayıncılar Birliği], there exist more than 700 publishing houses in Turkey, although only 7 of them had published at least one top-selling book in 2014. The 2016 report on the Turkish publishing market by the same organisation reveals that the number of books published in Turkey in 2016 was 666,865,579, and of these, 404,129,053 got a banderol. Of banderoled books, the figures for areas and topics were as follows: education (224,968,715), popular research and study (65,234,178), religion and faith (50,454,835), fiction and art (20,226,792), and academic (4,997,328).

[203] Selim Temo indicates that the total number of new titles stood overall 32,750 in 2007, so it seems like there has been a growth by around 50 per cent in Turkey's publishing market—but note also that of 32.750 new titles in 2007, only around 120 of them were written in Kurdish (*Notos Öykü* 49).

few years the freedom of speech and publication in Turkey has steadfastly regressed. The report show that the number of publishing houses that have been shut down, books that have been banned or being taken as criminal evidence, writers and journalist that have been arrested, imprisoned or dispelled from their official occupations, bookstores and publishing houses that have been sabotaged by arson attacks, books that have been restricted by the Ministry of National Education [*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı*], blogs, websites (including Wikipedia), and social media platforms that have been blocked, banned, or censored have reached now an alarmingly dramatic level,[204] particularly for publication in Kurdish language.

In fact, it seems at such a juncture Kurdish literature and publication has no choice but turn to diaspora once again for its survival. The future of the modern Kurdish literary institution is intrinsically bound to the future of democracy in Turkey and outside, as well as to the expansion of the Kurdish readership. The question of *addressivity*, in Bakhtin's term, that is, for whom Kurdish writers write, to whom their narrative addresses and turns to, is still one of the main dilemmas in Turkey. Apart from legal, economic, and political difficulties, Kurdish writers also have to endure the knowledge that their writings will remain unknown, unread by a majority of their addressees. Even the most popular literary works will not reach more than 10,000 readers, and the majority of readers will probably wish, wait for, or go for the Turkish translation of the work rather than putting up with the shame of struggling to read his/her own mother tongue, being obliged to consulting numerous dictionaries (for even quite common words and phrases) or to simply save up the amount of time and energy that such an undertaking calls for.[205] The outcome of this

[204] For full report: http://turkyaybir.org.tr/wp-content/files_mf/1495522936dusunceifaderapor_web.pdf

[205] Reading in Kurdish requires that one either teach himself/herself how to read in Kurdish or taking a limited Kurdish language course after attaining many other diplomas in Turkish. The number of such readers who are diligent enough to study and work on their mother tongue is not more than a few thousands.

is the *addressivity dilemma*, which brought about two camps of Kurdish writers, one suggesting that Kurdish works should be translated into Turkish, and the other opposing this strongly, arguing that this will prove counterproductive and lead Kurdish readers to follow their literature in Turkish.

Jean-Paul Sartre got to the heart of this question in a 1964 article in *Le Monde*. In this famous article, which Orhan Pamuk says made waves in Turkey as well, Sartre compared producing literature with a child dying of hunger in Third World countries. Sartre argued in this article that engaging in literature had become luxurious in such contexts, and suggested that Third World writers would not be able to enjoy the pleasures of literature with a clear conscience, and that genuine literature was for rich countries (Pamuk, *Öteki Renkler* 255). Although he described his feelings towards this article as a disillusionment with Sartre, Mario Vargas Llosa argued in this vein that "all Peruvian writers are doomed to defeat eventually," not because the lack of a readership of any significance or the absence of a serious literary publishing culture, but because all writers who keep up and stand against indifference, poverty, ignorance, and hostility are treated as lunatics and doomed to live an unrealistic life (Pamuk, *Öteki Renkler* 260-1). Considering his literature and Turkish literature in general as a part of Third World literature (which to him is not defined by poverty, the lack of readership, indifference, or any decidedly political quality, but by its distance from the centre of literature, the West), Pamuk concludes that it is not so difficult to resonate with Llosa's feelings. If Pamuk feels this way, it is not quite possible to imagine Kurdish writers' feelings, who, unlike Pamuk and Llosa, are not even in the periphery but rather in the *periphery of periphery*, whose tragedy is not certain eventual defeat, but knowing that there is defeat and nothing else from the very beginning.

I think this problem of *addressivity* in the double-peripheral context of Kurdish literature will have a great impact on the limits, quality, autonomy, and survival of Kurdish literature in the near future. In general, the future for both Turkish and Kurdish literatures, in my view, depends on the amount of freedom, democracy, and transformative politics the writers, readers, and literary institutions enjoy.

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