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Back to the future? The place of the religious ‘other’ in Ismail Gasprinsky’s Islamic utopia

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ABSTRACT

In 1906, Ismail Gasprinsky (1851–1914), a Crimean Tatar intellectual with ties to the Russian and the Ottoman intelligentsia published his novel *The Muslims of the Land of Serenity* [Darürrahat Müslümanları], one of the earliest utopian texts in a Turkic language. The narrative uncovers a secret land beyond the Sierra Nevada in Andalusia where some Muslims, having fled after the fall of Grenada in 1492, set up the ideal Muslim state preserving the memory of Islamic Spain over the centuries. This paper discusses factors in the Ottoman literary context that influenced the broad reception of the novel beyond Muslim communities and highlights influences on Gasprinsky from the Ukraine and Russia. After examining the complexities surrounding the religious ‘other’ and its relationship with the external world in Gasprinsky’s utopia, the paper concludes with reflections on the religious ‘other’ contributing to discussions on religious pluralism and freedom within utopian societies.

KEYWORDS

Ismail Gasprinsky (1851–1914); Islamic Spain in literature; Crimean Tatar literature; religious alterity; Islamic utopianism

Introduction: of a hidden land, a traveller and a sheikh-ex-machina

In 1906, a short utopian novel with the title *Darürrahat Müslümanları* (The Muslims of the Land of Serenity)¹ appeared on the shelves of the booksellers in Bakhchysarai, the former capital of the Crimean Khanate annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783. The author was indicated as Molla Abbas the Frenchman, an imaginary Central Asian traveller who had just visited France, but literati would have known that the real author was no other than Ismail Bey Gasprinsky (1851–1914), the pioneering Crimean Tatar journalist and reformist thinker.² His views on educational reform and women’s rights as well as his progressive interpretation of Islam had a significant impact among the Muslim

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¹As Gasprinsky strove to use a language that bridged the differences between Crimean Tatar, Ottoman Turkish and Azerbaijani, I have transcribed, for matters of convenience, the titles of his books and articles as well as some terms he uses according to the orthography of Modern Standard Turkish as defined by the *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Language Institute).

²There is extensive literature on Gasprinsky and his political views. Much of the biographical information is heavily indebted to Kirmer (1996 [1934]) and Lazzarini (1973). Works such as Kırmılı (1996) and Meyer (2014) look at the place of Gasprinsky within Islamic and Turkic activism in the Russian empire and beyond. Newer scholarship, however, brings to the fore the need to look more at Gasprinsky’s Russian-language works and to situate him also within Russian thought (Tikhonova and Ryzhenkov 2022; Sibgatullina 2022).

intelligentsia in the Turkic parts of the Russian empire where they spearheaded Jadidism, a reformist modernist Islamic movement in the Russian empire. His views on language reform and the need for a common Turkic literary tongue were received with much interest in Ottoman Turkey that he had visited on a few occasions. Beside his writings focused on the condition of Muslims in Russia and beyond, he was the author of numerous articles and essays that critically studied different European currents of thought that were debated in Russia and in Ottoman Turkey, occasionally penned in a hybrid language bridging the differences between his native Crimean Tatar, Azerbaijani, and Ottoman Turkish. He condemned both the apostles of capitalism, which he considered to be dehumanizing, and the followers of a materialist interpretation of socialism, whose premises contradicted what he regarded as human nature. In fact, he was an advocate of a humanist Islam and quickly became the target of Muslim conservatives and Russian imperialists. A truly ‘trans-imperial’ intellectual, to borrow the term used by James H. Meyer (2014, 21), Gasprinsky was equally at ease in Turkish as he was in Russian, addressing audiences with different expectations and tastes.

For the last twenty years, there has been an increased interest in Turkey and, internationally, in Turkish and Ottoman studies circles, for the history of utopian literature in Ottoman and republican Turkey. The increased availability of Ottoman Turkish texts in modern Turkish transliteration has also encouraged scholars working on utopian literature, but with no knowledge of Ottoman Turkish and of what is called in Turkey ‘the old letters’ (*eski harfler*), to engage with the genesis of the genre and to contribute to a diversification of utopian studies by challenging Eurocentric narratives. The role (or the absence) of religion is one of several characteristic features of Turkish-language utopian fiction in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Remarkably Gasprinsky’s novel is often mentioned among the early Turkish utopian fictions published in Ottoman Turkey, even though it was published bilingually – in Crimean Tatar and Russian – in the Crimea, then part of the Russian empire. Studying the work in the context of Turkish-language fiction is legitimate as the author himself republished the novel adapting its language in order to address an Ottoman readership. While the topic of the ‘Islamicness’ of Gasprinsky’s *Land of Serenity* has been the focus of much attention (i.a. Eroğlu 2013; Nebioğlu 2020; Alexeev, Ksenia, and Lahuti 2021), the perception of the religious other and the outside world has been less problematized. Some scholars have argued that the relationship between the inhabitants of the utopias and the others consisted of ‘binarizing divisions such as us/them, order/anarchy, and inside/outside peculiar’ (Nebioğlu, 616), though this is a view that needs to be questioned.

In order to study the question of the place of the religious other in Gasprinsky’s Islamic utopia and the relationship with the outside world, I will start by discussing aspects of the Ottoman literary context that prepared the reception of Gasprinsky’s novel, namely the publication of early Ottoman Turkish utopian texts, all of them secular, and the rise of interest for Islamic Spain in Ottoman Turkey, a phenomenon that also affected non-Muslim communities in Istanbul. In the next part of the article, I will look at some possible influences in the Ukraine and Russia on Gasprinsky and look at his engagement with Russian-language literature and thought. A wide and varied array of texts and authors ranging from Jan Potocki (1761–1815) to Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856) are part of the more general intellectual context that probably nourished his reflections on religion as he was writing his novel. One of the challenges of working on

Gasprinsky is the bilingualism of his literary and intellectual work and the fact that his thought and action were nurtured by both Islamic, which is multilingual, and Russophone thought and literature. While this makes him quite an original voice in the Ottoman-Turkish context, there is a danger to overemphasize one aspect over the other, as it is often the case in Turkish-language scholarship that sometimes overlooks the Russian-language input. Then, I will focus on Gasprinsky's novel, and discuss the relationship of the Land of Serenity with the outside world and the place of the 'religious other' in the Land. This analysis of the text provides the ground for concluding remarks that aim to complexify the concept of utopia in the study of religion by calling attention to the negotiation of pluralism and religious freedom within utopian imaginaries.

Back in 1906, Gasprinsky's new book had hardly been unknown to the reading public. This was the fifth edition of a novel that had already been serialized four times within the pages of his bilingual *Tercüman-Perevodchik* (The Translator) newspaper and its supplements. Before being reedited as a separate narrative, the novel had been the final part of the *Frengistan Mektupları* (The Letters from the Land of the Franks [Europe]), an imaginary travelogue relating the adventures of Molla Abbas, a learned young man from Tashkent in today's Republic of Uzbekistan, and partly based on Gasprinsky's own experiences in Europe, which were serialized in *Tercüman* between 1887 and 1889 in both Crimean Tatar and Russian.³

The final part of Molla Abbas' adventures in Europe hit a chord with the readers of Gasprinsky's newspaper, both in Russia and in Ottoman Turkey. The novel was in line with a genre that was well established in the Russophone world (Niqueux and Heller 1995; Lauer 2023), but still burgeoning in Ottoman Turkey (Kılıç 2004; Yalçınkaya 2004): Utopia. In many ways *Darürrahat Müslümanları* exhibited features of classic utopias. A traveller, here Molla Abbas, discovers a secret place, hidden away from the real world. Once the traveller has entered it, he has the opportunity to compare the harmonious society he is introduced to with the state of the real world as it is. On a quest to see the tombs of Muslims and architectural Islamic remains in Western Europe, Molla Abbas is woken up one night, as he sleeps on the site of the Alhambra palace in Grenada. He sees twelve young Muslim women chatting in Arabic. Both sides are rather surprised and frightened by the encounter and were it not for the apparition of what could best be described as a *sheikh-ex-machina* this might well have been the end of the story. The twelve women are accompanied by sheikh Djalal Efendi who turns out to be an acquaintance of Molla Abbas whom he had befriended in Paris. From a narrative point of view, the appearance of the sheikh in Spain is rather unexpected, but is a necessity for the plot to advance. Indeed, Sheikh Djalal reveals to the traveller the existence of a secret land – the Land of Serenity – reachable via a network of tunnels dug by Muslims centuries ago, as Christians were threatening to conquer Islamic Spain. Upon the fall of Grenada, Sayyidi Musa escaped with 140 people, carrying various goods, tools, books, and cattle, to a secrete enclave protected by the Sierra Nevada mountains. Taming a hostile natural environment, the refugees established the ideal state that reflected Gasprinsky's own aspirations, namely the compatibility of science and faith, the education of women – the twelve maidens that he met were graduates who travelled to the Alhambra as a reward for their academic excellence –, and personal development in

³On the complex publication history of *Darürrahat Müslümanları*, see Akpınar (2003, 64–67).

harmony with society.⁴ While Gasprinsky's novel was far from being a literary masterpiece, its utopian features set in the exotic surroundings of southern Spain seem to have responded to the expectations of readers thirsting for stories that were both didactic and entertaining, for Gasprinsky's narrative did not lack in humour.

It seems that it was not only among the Turkophone Muslims in the Russian Empire that the narrative had attracted much attention. Indeed, when in 1895 he serialized a new edition of the work now renamed *Darürrahat yaki Acaib-i Diyar-ı İslam* (The Land of Serenity or the Marvels of the Country of Islam) as a supplement for *Tercüman* newspaper, Gasprinsky explained that 'he presented the final part of the work to his customers in the Ottoman realms having removed the passages about the journey through Europe and about Europe' (quoted in Akpınar 2003, 66). As a consequence, he reviewed the language of the work in order to bring it closer to Ottoman Turkish, as the Crimean Turkish and Ottoman Turkish languages are closely related. But the desire to reach a broader audience was not the only reason that led Gasprinsky to reedit the work. In a foreword to another new serialization of the novel with the title *Darürrahat Müslümanları yaki Diyar-ı Garibeye Seyahat* (The Muslims of the Land of Serenity or a Journey into a Strange Land) in *Tercüman* starting on 24 November 1903⁵, the editor explained that there had been a readers' demand for a new publication. More importantly, the editor noted that back in 1887 *Tercüman* had been unable to publish all of Molla Abbas' observations. He implied that they would have been too challenging for his audience that was newly becoming acquainted with the press as a vector of new ideas. Today, however, there was no more reason to hold back (Tercüman Editorial Office 1903, 194).⁶ Gasprinsky would then publish this version in book form in 1906 in the arguably hybrid language that would have been easily intelligible also in Istanbul.⁷

Al-Andalus in Ottoman Turkish literature

When it had been serialized for the first time in 1895 with Ottoman readers in mind, the novel was feeding into two seemingly unrelated fashions in literary Istanbul, namely an interest into the history of Islamic Spain and the publication of literary texts with utopian motives. Whether Gasprinsky was aware of these developments is a question that is difficult to answer. What is known, however, is that he followed Ottoman Turkish literature with a critical eye and that he saw himself as a pioneer in those matters too.⁸ Yet al-Andalus, Islamic Spain, had marked modern Turkish literature and Gasprinsky's

⁴In this article I have made use of Yavuz Akpınar's critical edition of the 1906 edition of the novel (Gaspıralı 2003). An extensive English-language summary of the novel can be found in Alexeev, Ksenia, and Lahuti (2021).

⁵The publishing dates for the articles are indicated in the Julian calendar which was used by the newspaper beside the Islamic hijri calendar. At the time, as it is today, the Julian calendar was 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar.

⁶Significant is the fact that the novel was also published in Russian translation with the title *Tainstvennaya Strana* (The Mysterious Land). Hence it represents an important addition to the Russian-language utopian literary tradition. That Gasprinsky gave importance to this narrative is shown by his intended serialization of an Arabic translation of the novel in the short-lived newspaper titled *al-Nahdah* (The Renaissance) that he published in Cairo in 1908. See Kuttner (1975).

⁷Yavuz Akpınar notes that the linguistic differences between the various versions of the novels are significantly different and would require a detailed study (Akpınar 2003, 67).

⁸In a piece he published on 20 November 1884 on the state of Ottoman Turkish literature, he noted that the aim of the literary critic was not to write praises, but to write critical appraisals. He was conscious that he was a pioneer: 'Yes, in Istanbul criticism [kritika] has not been born yet and while literature is still in the age of eulogy, how can a son of the Crimea start to criticise. It has never been easy to start something new' (Gaspıralı 2008, 203).

utopian novel had probably contributed to the hype that continued from the late years of the nineteenth century to the early years of the republic.

Indeed, in 1927, Sami Paşazade Sezai (1859–1936), a realist novelist and pioneer of the short story, published an article in the literary periodical *Yeni Kitap* (The New Book), titled ‘El-Mescidü’l-Camia; Elhamra’ (The Great Mosque; Alhambra), where he related his travels to Cordoba and Grenada – one of two travelogues that he devoted to his years as Ottoman ambassador in Madrid between 1908 and 1921. When writing about the Alhambra, he evoked a world of past greatness in a dreamlike language:

The Alhambra seemed to me like a tent set in the desert, in which the spring of the highest ideas and the finest arts had flourished, so that when I opened the blue atlas curtain on its door, Andalusia, old Damascus, Bagdad, the whole of Arabia, with its armoured, helmeted soldiers, its poets who encouraged war and heroism, its fiery orators, its scholars who were the workers of civilization, and its people who were later enslaved by corruption, seemed like a dream, a mirage in the mists from afar. (Sami Paşazade 1998a, 111)

The text did not mention Gasprinsky’s *Darürrahât Müslümanları* but together with Sezai’s earlier travelogue ‘Gırnata’ (Grenada), published during Turkey’s national liberation war in 1921, ‘El-Mescidü’l-Camia; Elhamra’ was among the latest literary texts that engaged with the past greatness of Islamic Andalusia. Narratives such as Sezai’s built on a corpus of texts that were published in the wake of the publication of Ziya Pasha’s (1829–1880) Ottoman Turkish translation of Louis Viardot’s (1800–1883) influential *Histoire des Arabes et des Mores d’Espagne* (History of the Arabs and the Moors of Spain, 1851) in 1859. The latter is credited with instigating a literary fashion for texts that referred to the history of al-Andalus, both to its greatness and its downfall. Authors as diverse as Şemsettin Sami (1850–1904), a pioneer of modern Ottoman Turkish and Albanian literatures, the prolific poet and playwright Abdülhak Hamit [Tarhan]⁹ (1852–1937) and the more conservative poet and writer Muallim Naci (1850–1893) treated the subject in a variety of plays that might have set the ground for the reception of Gasprinsky’s much more optimistic take on Islamic Andalusia.¹⁰ For reformist Ottoman Turkish writers, engaging with al-Andalus was an opportunity to point to an era in history when Islamic rule was arguably synonymous with scientific and intellectual progress, while warning against the dangers of separatism and misrule without too openly denouncing conditions in the Ottoman homeland. This being said, medieval Spain was not only of concern to Muslim authors. A novel such as Chateaubriand’s *Les aventures du dernier Abencérage* (The Adventures of the Last Abencerage, 1821), translated in 1861 into Armeno-Turkish by Kirkor Çilingiryan (1839–1923) and reedited in 1863 and 1877, attracted significant attention and was published in Ottoman Turkish in 1881 by A. Tahir and again by Mesut Kadri in 1913 (Mignon 2021, 74–75). Exchanges between philosephardic Spanish intellectuals such as Angel Pulido (1852–1932) and Ottoman Jewish intellectuals also testify of an increased interest in Spanish history among the Jewish intelligentsia. This interest was reflected in the Judeo-Spanish press, even though the memory of the expulsion from Spain and the brutality of the *Reconquista* were recurring themes.¹¹ This was much to the despair of Pulido who complained that

⁹Surnames taken by authors after the adoption of the Surname Law in Turkey in 1934 are given in square brackets.

¹⁰The Andalusian motive in nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish literature has attracted much scholarly attention, see *inter alia*, Ayvazoğlu (1996), Enginün (2000, 32–41) and Uğurcan (2004).

¹¹On the topic, see, *inter alia*, Cohen (2014) and Díaz-Mas (2000).

‘the Sephardim have a misconception of Spain. Just as their current jargon is the language they took from Spain in 1492, but which is now corrupted; their understanding of our customs and government is the wretched one that they took from the country of Torquemada’ (Pulido Fernandez 1905, 13). As we will see, the condemnation of the Inquisition and religious intolerance were also very present in Gasprinsky’s novel. At the time of its publication in book form in 1906, the Ottoman reading public would have been receptive to the Andalusian theme in Gasprinsky’s novel.

Early Ottoman Turkish utopias

It is striking that utopian fiction increased in popularity, at least among authors writing in Ottoman Turkish, in the final years of the Ottoman Empire. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars over the last twenty years who have brought to the fore how those texts engaged with the role of Islam in future society and the question of the preservation and the future form of the Ottoman state. Yet these fictions were all much posterior to the serialization of Gasprinsky’s text that makes the progressive interpretation of Islam and its compatibility with science and the arts among the founding principles of the ideal society. Yet it is interesting to see that the earlier Ottoman Turkish texts that explored utopian motives seem to have envisaged a society that was freed from institutionalized religion, statehood, and, rather importantly, technology. Two Ottoman Turkish writers, namely Tevfik Fikret (1867–1914) and Hüseyin Cahit [Yalçın] (1875–1914) were to write a range of literary texts in the late 1890s – several poems in the case of Fikret and a short story titled ‘Hayat-ı Muhayyel’ (Imaginary Life) in the case of Cahit – that imagined an island commune established by people having escaped ‘from ornamented salons, unnatural, dirty lives’ (Hüseyin 1910, 5). A deep desire to commune with nature was at the heart of those texts. In the poem with the title ‘Ömr-i Muhayyel’ (An Imaginary Life) that he wrote in response to Hüseyin Cahit’s short-story and dedicated to its author, Tevfik Fikret referred to ‘an imaginary world [...] among the lakes, green, empty/ among the lakes [...] in ecstasy’ (Tevfik 2001, 368). The two writers dreamt of a return to an original state, a return to a lost paradise. It comes thus as no surprise that the first child born on Cahit’s imaginary commune should be named Adem (Adam) and soon be followed by a Havva (Eve). Reflecting on their influences, Cahit reminisced in a piece that he wrote for *Yedigün* (Seven Days), an influential cultural periodical, in 1937, in the following terms:

We were convinced with the fervour of youth and our ability to believe. Works such as *Utopie*, *Cité du Soleil*, which we read in secret, had awakened in our souls the dream of living together without thoughts about ‘mine’ and ‘yours,’ like brothers and sisters, like true human beings and of establishing a clean society. (Hüseyin 1937, 5)

The references to the French titles of Thomas More’s (1478–1535) *Utopia* and Tommaso Campanella’s (1568–1639) *Civitas Soli* show that Cahit and his friends read those texts in French translation. Strikingly, however, unlike More and Campanella’s Christian-inspired visions of the ideal society the utopian texts composed by Cahit and Fikret avoided open religious references apart from the longing for a lost Eden. The desire to embrace and become one with nature points more to the pantheistic tendencies of those texts than to traditional Jewish, Christian, or Islamic understandings of paradise.

Notable is here the fact that Hüseyin Cahit and Tevfik Fikret were not only dreaming up literary paradises but that with a group of friends, including the father of the Turkish psychological novel Mehmet Rauf (1875–1931), the future lexicographer Hüseyin Kazım Kadri (1870–1934), and the physician Mehmet Esat [Işık] (1865–1936), they considered the possibility to emigrate and establish a commune in New Zealand in order to escape the increasingly oppressive atmosphere of the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II.¹² However, there was more to this project than political despair in the face of authoritarianism, as the retreat into nature was also an escape from a society at the onset of industrialization and a rejection of the very idea of progress, even though the idea of progress would be at the heart of Fikret's later poems. The new settlement was to be called Yeşil Yurt, green land, but the emigration project failed due to a lack of financial means. A follow-up project that foresaw the friends taking over a farm belonging to Hüseyin Kazım in a village named Tepecik, close to the western Anatolian city of Manisa, did not attract much enthusiasm, and sketches of this early utopianism only survived in the memoirs of the main protagonists and some literary texts. It was meaningful that 'the green felicity akin to spring' that Fikret evoked in his poem 'Yesilyurt' (367) had the colour of blossoming nature, not of Islam. The utopian texts that Ottoman Turkish readers would have been familiar with at the time Gasprinsky published his revised novel in book form would have been secular.

Slavonic influences?

Gasprinsky does not refer to Tevfik Fikret and Hüseyin Cahit's utopian writings in his own work, neither did he evoke the Ottoman literary fashion around the theme of al-Andalus in his literary criticism. Yet his own work seems to have been very much in the spirit of the time, at least in Ottoman Istanbul. What he did was to merge the longing for al-Andalus with the utopian desire. Unlike Cahit and Fikret's secular project, Gasprinsky's utopia would be religious. Meanwhile an interesting question that arises is whether Gasprinsky might have been familiar with Jan Potocki's picaresque novel *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (Manuscript found in Saragossa), which had been originally written in French. Alexeev, Kulikova, and Lahuti note that the episodic form, the combination of humour and earnest, and the reference to Muslims living in a secret enclave are similarities with Gasprinsky's later narrative (2021, 186). Gasprinsky was fluent in French and he might have come across excerpts of Potocki's text. The novel, however, had a complex composition history and was never printed in its entirety in French during Gasprinsky's lifetime, though proof editions that included the early passages of the narrative that introduce the Moorish princesses, were published in 1804 in Saint Petersburg, and in 1813 and 1814 in Paris.

The idea of Muslims taking refuge in underground passages is one interesting aspect of the tale narrated by Emina, one of the Moorish princesses, to Count Alphonse Van Worden, the main protagonist of the *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, that brings to mind Gasprinsky's narrative. Moreover, the relative freedom of the two Muslim

¹²There is extensive literature available on this famous episode of late nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish literature. Beside the memoirs of several of the protagonists, Beşir Ayvazoğlu's biography of Tevfik Fikret (2019, 222–229) provides a good overview. See also Öztürk (2010).

princesses Emina and Zibeddé, as well as their unusual way of dressing and, more importantly, their historical consciousness also evoke characters from Gasprinsky's novel. Indeed, though more chaste in her appearance than Potocki's princesses (Potocki 1996, 12), Feride Banu, one of the inhabitants of the *Land of Serenity* who is not insensitive to the charms and charisma of the foreign traveller, dresses, like other young women in the hidden lands, in a way that surprises Molla Abbas who is used to the strict dress code for women in his native Tashkent: 'Feride Banu had not put on the clothes she had been wearing while travelling. She was dressed colourfully and beautifully. Thus, she looked even more attractive, and her voice seemed even more pleasing and sweeter' (Gaspıralı 2003, 239). This was not the first time that the narrator had been surprised by the attire of young Muslim women in the Land of Serenity. Shortly after having encountered them, he confessed his surprise at seeing 'Muslim women with uncovered faces who were not running away from me' (Gaspıralı 2003, 191).

Of course, the quest of the two sisters to find a man to help them to generate an heir and perpetuate their people in Potocki's novel is a fundamental aspect of the frame-tale that has no equivalence in Gasprinsky's narrative. But, beside the alluring attire of the women and their exemplary education, the fact that they tell a story of Catholic oppression is significant. In Emina's words:

Then my mother taught us herself about the history of our family, and placed in our hands a great number of memoirs, some in Arabic, some in Spanish. How odious your law seemed to us, dear Alphonse. How we hated your priests and their persecutions! And how strongly we sympathized on the other hand with their many illustrious victims whose blood flowed in our veins! (Potocki 1996, 16–17)

In Gasprinsky's novel too, Feride Banu paints a grim portrait of the *Reconquista* and its aftermath:

The advanced al-Andalus was destroyed in little time and ceased to be. Large towns were emptied and the villages, vineyards and gardens were in ruins. The water in the fountains dried up. The civilized lifestyle and happiness left the lands and fanaticism and ignorance established themselves. The robe of righteous cadis was taken over by the brutal judges of the Inquisition. (Gaspıralı 2003, 203)

The identification of religious fanaticism and ignorance of worldly sciences – the latter being expressed with the Turkified Persian term *nadanlık* and not the Arabic *cehalet* that could also be referring to ignorance in religious matters – are the two pillars of the *Reconquista* in contradistinction to which Gasprinsky's utopia would be defined.

The problem of religious tolerance mattered not only in the context of the ideal state. In the Russian Empire too, Gasprinsky needed to make a case for religious diversity. In an article published on 9 December 1905, he extensively quoted the letters of Nikolai Ilminsky (1822–1891), a Russian Orthodox missionary and Turkologist. Ilminsky vehemently criticized Gasprinsky's endeavour to promote education and Islam among the Muslims and Turkic peoples of Russia. Ilminsky denounced the Tatar thinker to Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev (1827–1907), a close advisor of the Czar:

This man has three aims. The first one is to spread education appropriate for the Muslims of Russia. The second one is to unify the Turkic peoples of Russia speaking different dialects (like in the German union) and, thirdly, to impose the Ottoman language to all Turkic peoples. You see, your Excellency, what a demonic measure he took to delude us by

publishing half of his newspaper in Russian, so that he seems to be working for us. (Quoted in Gaspiralı 2008, 89)

Gasprinsky was conscious of the dangers represented by such a denunciation, the more so that in another article Ilminsky had stressed that Gasprinsky's project represented a threat to the Russian Orthodox Church in the Empire. In response, Gasprinsky clearly explained that he did not wish to spread the Ottoman Turkish language and, more importantly, that the promotion of modern education and Islam among the Turkic peoples would be beneficial for Russia: 'We want the Muslims of Russia to be faithful servants of Russia and beside being good fellow-travellers to the Russians, to be strong in their faith, civilized in their national identity and progressive thanks to their mother-language' (Gaspiralı 2008, 90). Gasprinsky knew that the censor was reading over his shoulder and that he had to sound convincing. Nevertheless the discourse promoting the living together, side by side, of citizens of the Russian Empire having different ethnoreligious identities was not only a discursive strategy in the face of the censors and possible repression. It deeply mattered to him.

The quest for a common literary language for the Turkic peoples is another topic that he returned to again and again, sometimes even in unexpected contexts. In the wake of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war, interest in Japan rose, also in the Crimean press. Like in Ottoman Turkey, where intellectuals wondered whether the Japanese policies of industrialization and development could be of use as a model, Gasprinsky too looked at Japan in awe. One of the topics that he highlighted was that Japan had a common literary language, a precondition according to him, for any type of progress. He noted in a piece that he published on 15 March 1906 that 'although there is a local dialect in each of the islands of Japan, its writers and authors started by 'unifying the language' and thus, together with the spoken and written language they united the ideas, the intentions and the endeavours of the nation' (Gasprinsky 1906, 1). The advocacy of a common literary language did not override his call to the Muslims of Russia to learn Russian, which he saw as a tool of integration, learning, and empowerment. Back in 1881, in his controversial essay *Russkoe Musul'manstvo* (Russian Muslimhood), he made the case that 'ignorance of the Russian language isolates [Muslims] from Russian thought and literature, not to mention [that it leads to their] complete isolation from universal human culture' (Gasprinsky 1881, 8). This is a topic that his newspaper would also address regularly, despite criticism from conservative Islamic religious circles.

Access to Russian thought and literature seems to have always mattered to Gasprinsky. Two names regularly come up in the biographies of the author, namely the journalist Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov (1818–1887), a national-conservative intellectual with a considerable literary flair, and the writer Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818–1883), whose famous novel *Otcy i Deti* (Fathers and Sons, 1862) Katkov serialized in his journal *Russkii Vestnik* (Russian Herald), in addition to most of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) and some of Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy's (1828–1910) major works. According to some sources, it is during his stay in Moscow, where he studied at the Miliutin military academy, that Gasprinsky came to know Katkov (Akçura 1928, 338; Kırimer 1996, 17–18). Turkish sources tend to emphasize that he developed his pan-turkist views in reaction to Katkov's nationalist Slavophilism. In a study devoted to the genesis of Turkism, Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935), a Turkish nationalist intellectual of Tatar

heritage, maintains that the ‘anti-Turkish’ articles that Katkov wrote about the Cretan revolt (1866–1869) were a wake-up call for Gasprinsky, still a teenager at the time, and led to his nationalist awakening (Akçura 1928, 338).¹³ While it might well be that Gasprinsky did not share Katkov’s views, he seems to have nurtured great feelings of respect for the Russian journalist. Indeed, in an unsigned obituary published on the title page of *Tercüman*, Gasprinsky saluted Katkov’s intellectual courage, and, probably not without a pinch of envy, noted the influence that the journalist wielded among the Russian intelligentsia and the political milieu (‘M.N. Katkov,’ 1). Less polemic is the representation of Gasprinsky’s relationship with Turgenev, though, here too, there seems to be little more than personal reminiscences to corroborate the contact. It seems that as he was in Paris between 1872 and 1874, he mingled with the Russian intellectual émigré community and worked among others as Turgenev’s personal assistant (Lazzerini 1973, 13). Gasprinsky had much admiration for Turgenev. In an article titled ‘Lisan ve Mesuliyet’ (Language and Responsibility), he listed him as one of the Russian ‘literary geniuses’ who made use of a common literary language – an important topic for him (Gaspıralı 2008, 136). This would not have come as a surprise to Gasprinsky’s readers who might have been familiar with the succinct but high-minded obituary that his newspaper had published on 23 September 1883 upon the death of the Russian novelist. Not only had the obituarist stressed Turgenev’s place in Russian literature, but he had brought to the fore his universality by comparing his importance to that of Persian poets Hafez and Sadi in the ‘East’ (‘Vefatname 1883,’ 1).

As a rule, Russian literature, both prose and poetry, was regularly a feature in *Tercüman*, especially when novels and short stories were translated into Turkic languages, such as Ottoman Turkish, Azerbaijani or Crimean Tatar. In this context an important question arises as to whether Gasprinsky could have been familiar with the utopian tradition in Russian literature. Most probably, by the time he had left for Paris, he must also have been aware of the writings of the *narodniki*, the revolutionary populists, among others Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky’s (1828–1889) (Kırımlı 1996, 33). If Gasprinsky was familiar with the writings of Chernyshevsky, he might even have read the Russian thinker’s utopian novel *Chto delat?* (What is to be done?, 1863).¹⁴ *Darürrahat Müslümanları* in its final form had little in common with Chernyshevsky’s utopian novel. Yet, one cannot help but wonder if in the context of the discourse about women’s rights and the equality of women and men, Gasprinsky was not offering the readers of *Tainstvennaya strana*, the Russian version of his novel, an alternative to Chernyshevsky’s vision and gallery of new women. The Tatar writer presented the character of Feride Banu, a bright and attractive young woman who is both educated and an educator, as a model to his readers, and Islamic society as the ideological structure that would enable women’s emancipation.¹⁵ This interpretation might not be as far-fetched as it seems, as Gasprinsky always maintained that Muslim empowerment would be beneficial for Russia. In the Land of Serenity, women enjoyed a whole

¹³As shown by Tikhonova and Ryzhenkov, Akçura’s views, later republished in book form, and Cafer Seydahmet Kırimer’s biography of Gasprinsky were to deeply influence the reception of the latter’s life and work in Turkey and beyond (Tikhonova and Ryzhenkov, 230–242).

¹⁴Alexeev, Kulikova and Lahuti also point to the existence of ‘cross-cultural traditions of utopian writing’ and the existence of early Russia utopias (2021, 185).

¹⁵On the representation of women in *Chto Delat*, see Andrew (1988, 155–180).

range of rights and freedoms unthinkable at the time in Russia, the Islamic world, or even much of the rest of Europe, ranging from higher education, to the ability to become a judge, to the right to ask for a divorce. While it is true that at school, which was segregated, women were also taught beside science, technology, and art, 'knowledge useful to womankind,' women had become experts in medicine, pedagogy, and law (Gaspıralı 2003, 256).

Gasprinsky's own readings in French and other languages and his familiarity with the literary and publishing milieu in Istanbul certainly had an impact on his interpretation of al-Andalus as a lost golden age. However, if we accept the premise that Gasprinsky's approach to Russian nationalist thought and Slavophilia was not simply one of counterreaction but rather one of critical engagement with the ideas at their heart, the approach of Slavophile thinkers to Islamic Spain might also have been of interest to him. Ivan Vasilyevich Kireevsky, considered with Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov (1804–1860) as the founder of the Slavophile movement, reflected upon the significance of the Islamic presence on the Iberian Peninsula. In a piece on the relations between European and Russian cultures published originally in 1852 in *Moskovskii sbornik* (Moscow Miscellany), Kireevsky underlined the European debt to the intellectual culture of classical Islam both in the Middle East and in Spain. This was not meant as a compliment, because he had little good to say about Islamic culture and the European intellectual tradition:

The impact [of the Arabs] on Western Europe, however, was particularly great, because they brought it the brilliance of their flourishing knowledge at the very time Europe lived in almost total ignorance. There can be no doubt that the abstract-logical tendency of their learning helped strengthen the same tendency in European learning. And, though for only a short while, the varicoloured stream of their talismanic speculations mingled with the dominant current of European thought, they were the first to acquaint the Latin theologians with the works of Aristotle, which first became known to them in translation from the Arabic, with Arabic commentaries. (Kireevsky 1998, 207)

The compatibility of faith and science, a key Slavophile principle (Obolovitch 2019, 47–58), is a view shared by Gasprinsky and the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity, who endeavour to study both the 'Book of God' and the 'Book of Nature.' However, Gasprinsky interprets this compatibility in a different way: He does not share the Slavophiles' anti-Enlightenment agenda and is a believer in human progress. When Molla Abbas expresses his surprise at the scientific achievements in the Land of Serenity – including the fertilization of chicken eggs in the absence of chicken – Sheikh Djalal explains to the traveller: 'You know much about the Ancient Word [Kelam-i kadim, a reference to the Qur'an] but you have not heard of the Book of the Laws of Nature' (Gaspıralı 2003, 225). However, according to the Sheikh, the study of the laws of nature that 'derive from the Great Book [Kitab-ı Kebir, another reference to the Qur'an]' (Gaspıralı 2003, 225) teaches how to turn a hostile environment into a liveable space – before the arrival of the refugees the lands hidden by the Sierra Nevada had been foul-smelling swamps (Gaspıralı 2003, 208) – and make scientific progress. According to the religious leaders of the Land of Serenity, the Qur'an provided inspiration and guidance on how to respond to the challenges posed by inhospitable natural surroundings. But how were the inhabitants of the land to engage with the challenges represented by the religious others among their midst and the outside world?

The religious other and the outside world

The place of non-believers in religious utopias is always a sensitive issue. So is the question of the relationship with the outside world. In More's *Utopia*, religious freedom, including for atheists, and the tolerance of religious diversity were the norm, even though Christianity which had been introduced by the traveller Raphael Hythlodæus, eventually gained in popularity among the islanders (Kessler 2002). But the fact that the one Christian convert who strayed from Utopia's promotion of religious tolerance and denounced other religions as 'profane' while condemning their 'impious' and 'sacrilegious' followers to 'the hell-fires they richly deserved' is arrested and sentenced to exile for causing civil unrest (More 1989, 94), shows that the Utopians were unable to tolerate those who made exclusive truth claims and acted upon their belief.

As we will see further down, the question of religious tolerance is of a different nature in the Land of Serenity, because religious diversity is inexistent and the community was established as a consequence of religious persecution. The question of the cohabitation with the outside world has, however, an increased importance.

Hüseyin Cahit's aforementioned island commune was informed about the outside world through the press that was regularly brought over. This reinforced the islanders in their desire to live separately. On the contrary, as we will see, the Muslims in the Land of Serenity who also regularly follow events in the outside world¹⁶ have a much more complex relationship with the outside world.

Gasprinsky's role in the development of Jadidism, Islamic reform, and his advocacy of the rights of the Muslim and Turkic peoples of the Russian Empire have occasionally led scholars to overemphasize a dichotomy between the Muslims and the others in his novel. This, however, is an argument that needs to be softened. The novel displays some dichotomic thinking, but strikingly the dichotomy seems to be more between two conceptions of Islam, than an opposition between the faithful and the infidel. When the *amir*, the ruler of the Land of Serenity, questions the traveller about the attitude towards learning and science in Turkistan, the latter 'was so much ashamed that, had the earth split, he would have gone underground' and he 'blushed because of the disgrace of the country and the homeland [and] boiled in bloody sweat.' The *amir*, on the other hand, could not understand why the people in Turkistan did not engage with the Russians and the Franks in order to learn about the arts and technology. 'Not to learn about the world, to be ignorant of its state, leads to downfall,' he explained. He gave as an example the Chinese, a non-Islamic people, as the illustration of a nation that 'only considered themselves to be human' and to be 'knowledgeable in matters of arts and sciences.' Nowadays, however, they 'have the intellect of a child. [...] It is known that this state of 400 million people does not have the influence and power of the Frankish government of Belgium, though the latter is but a handful' (Gaspıralı 2003, 253–254). The inhabitants of the Land of Serenity are deeply shocked by the state of the Islamic world, especially by the obscurantism leading to the reduction of the pursuit of knowledge to the so-called

¹⁶This very much surprises Molla Abbas: 'What a strange situation! No one knows about you and yet you are knowledgeable about our world' (Gaspıralı 2003, 205). The reason for this is that wise men are regularly sent out to the outside world in order to report about the state of the world. One of them was actually asked to report on the reliability and the reputation of the traveller. There is a newspaper with the name *İstikbal* (The Future) that reports about the outside world. Here too the narrator can only express his awe: 'There is nothing that these strange Muslims I have fallen among do not know, but nobody has heard of them' (Gaspıralı 2003, 230).

Islamic sciences and by the status of women, more precisely the absence of equality between man and women. The ban on music and song is another aspect of contemporary Turkistani society that revolts the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity who cultivate the arts. As the ruling *amir* tells the narrator: 'Our holy prophet has taught us to learn worldly sciences and to pursue them, wherever they are. As for Ali, he taught that it was every Muslim's duty to learn every science and every art form' (Gaspıralı 2003, 254). The reference to the prophet and the fourth caliph is an indication that the rulers of the Land of Serenity lay claim to the authentic interpretation of Islam which they contrast to the forms of the faith practiced in the Islamic world in the late nineteenth century.

When relating the history of Islamic Spain, the narrator contrasts an era when 'the Franks used to come from the European countries to al-Andalus to learn science and art in the Islamic schools' (Gaspıralı 2003, 178) with an age after the *Reconquista* when 'almost nothing remains of the works of civilization of al-Andalus' (Gaspıralı 2003, 178). Even today's Spain 'in the age of the telegraph, the steamboat and the railroad' had not reached the level of civilization of the Muslims 500 years ago (Gaspıralı 2003, 178). The fundamental opposition between al-Andalus and Spain after the Christian conquest is less a matter of religion, than of attitudes towards science, technology, and the arts that need to be cultivated. Hence, the reason why the Christians burned down the libraries was not only because of their fanaticism, but because 'they were ignorant of science and its value' (Gaspıralı 2003, 177).

When the sensitive topic of the condition of women is being discussed, the Land of Serenity sees its practices in contradistinction to two 'others': the Islamic world and Europe. The language used by Molla Abbas to refer to the status of women is more revealing of his, and perhaps of Gasprinsky's, perception of women in Asia and Europe, than it is of the situation in the lands that he visited:

Muslim women of the Land of Serenity are not like our women in Turkistan who are like animals who can speak, they are not like the women of Frengistan [Europe] who are instruments of impudicity. Just as the Muslim women of the Land of Serenity do not resemble the concubines of Asia and the Orient, they do not look like the dolls of Frengistan. In this country, neither will you encounter the odalisques of Kashmir, nor will you meet the whores of France. As the Land of Serenity is really an Islamic country, the people are not divided in classes and cliques. As everyone is equal, all can only be distinguished through their natural talents or the science and the reputation that they have acquired. (Gaspıralı 2003, 256)

The arrival of Molla Abbas, an outsider, in the Land of Serenity represents a challenge for the secluded community. The fact that he is a Muslim and that Sheikh Djalal vouches for him, beside the positive reports of the emissaries sent to the outside world to enquire about the traveller, turn him into a welcome guest who is invited to stay. The problem is that he only wishes to be a guest and wants to leave. The traveller, though fascinated by what he sees, aims to pursue his journey and eventually perform the Hajj. Also, never to see his homeland again seems unbearable to him. More importantly, he feels restrained, imprisoned even: 'Their whole country is like a prison' (Gaspıralı 2003, 265).

While Molla Abbas, the outsider, was invited to stay and settle, giving him the permission to leave is more of a problem. For the *amir* and the council governing the country, this represents an unforeseen situation. Never had anyone expressed the

desire to leave. In a first stage, the Great Council rejects the traveller's petition because 'his departure might cause a range of problems' (Gaspıralı 2003, 261). But Molla Abbas' objection that the verdict is 'coercive and oppressive' and violates the rights of a 'free and major Muslim' is eventually accepted by the council (Gaspıralı 2003, 261–262), an indication that there seems to be room and respect for individual dissent.

Conscious of his hosts' concerns about the discovery of their land, the traveller promises not to say a word. Yet they let him go unconditionally. The subtext of this decision is that they do not want to deprive him of his free will. Ultimately, more than religion, human agency had been the motor of the Land of Serenity. The decision to leave Grenada, the conquest of a hostile environment and the establishment of an egalitarian society that values an interpretation of religion in harmony with science, technology and the arts were all the result of human decisions. But, before leaving, Molla Abbas is incarcerated in a dark cell. He is drugged, before waking up in an Augustinian hospice in Grenada. The short-term incarceration is probably meant as an invitation to the traveller to think about the true meaning of imprisonment as he felt restricted in his freedom when he was invited to stay in the Land of Serenity. When eventually he reveals the existence of the Land of Serenity to his doctor, he is only met with disbelief. Moreover, the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity have taken the necessary steps to prevent the discovery of their secret passageways in the Alhambra.

Molla Abbas had never been a real outsider. He was a pious Muslim, open to the world, who could be integrated in this ideal society. In the lands that considered lying the greatest crime and whose prisons were empty (Gaspıralı 2003, 218), the honesty of the traveller was appreciated. In order to look at how outsiders would be treated, it is necessary to consider the narratives about the history of al-Andalus and the perception of the contemporary outside world. In her long monologue on the history of al-Andalus and the genesis of the Land of Serenity, Feride Banu makes a remark that is significant in regard to religious coexistence when referring to the fall of Grenada:

And thus, sighs and cries were to be heard all over al-Andalus. The tears of the Jews merged with the tears of the Muslims, for the former too were persecuted. The most enviable condition was to be allowed to emigrate to the Maghreb. So that hundreds of thousands of Muslims and thousands of Jews, wretched and naked, left their homeland and possessions, entrusting the tombs that are the beds of their fathers and ancestors, to the enemy. (Gaspıralı 2003, 203)

The fact that the oppression of the Jews is on par with the oppression of the Muslims in her take on the fall of Islamic Andalusia can be read as a rejection of religious particularism. Feride Banu goes even further and emphasizes that while 600 years ago 'the Franks were wild,' this is no longer the case for reasons that, in between lines, seem to be the rise of humanism and of Enlightenment ideals:

[...] The oppression and darkness have entirely disappeared in the Land of the Franks, as justice, mercy and the light of science have spread. The feeling of humanity has spread and they have understood that the Muslims and the Jews are also servants of almighty God. (Gaspıralı 2003, 204)

Hence the Christians too cease to be an opponent and the doors to a mutually beneficial coexistence between peoples of various communities seem to be open.

So, what prevents the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity to reveal their existence to the outside world? This is a question that troubles Molla Abbas as well, as the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity are 'well aware that they would be submitted to no harassment and coercion' (205). The answer to the question is based on the testament of the founding father Sayyidi Musa who determined that the dwellers would be allowed to leave the lands in the year 1500 of the hijra, when his testament, currently shut behind forty locks whose keys are held by forty imams, would be read (Gaspıralı 2003, 205–206). But there is more to this. Sheikh Djalal explains that they do not wish to reveal their existence and mingle with the nations of the world because of their knowledge of the problems that affect the world (205). Hence beside the millenarist belief, free will continues to play a role. Djalal is unable to provide an explanation regarding the year 1500: 'Nobody knows why this was ordained' (206).

Concluding remarks

Though the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity do not understand the founding father's commandment, they respect it. This symbolizes the role of faith and religion in Gasprinsky's utopia, which is in clear contradistinction to the earliest Ottoman Turkish utopian texts by Hüseyin Cahit and Tevfik Fikret. This being said, it is in line with most Russian utopian texts known at the time, even if the religion is different (Niqueux and Heller 1995). In Gasprinsky's text the role of religion is also symbolized by the fact that the *lingua franca* that allows Molla Abbas and the inhabitants of the utopia to communicate is Arabic. This is the native language of the dwellers of the land, but for the traveller it is, above all, the language of Islam, which he speaks imperfectly (Gaspıralı 2003, 190). For an author such as Gasprinsky for whom the question of the common language was of preeminent importance, the choice of Arabic in this narrative is significant. The Islam that the inhabitants of the utopia practice is the interpretation that Gasprinsky advocated: The pursuit of science, the development of technology – the Land of Serenity exhibits a few innovations that would not be out of place in a science-fiction novel – the promotion of the arts, a form of parliamentary rule and, most importantly, the equality of men and women whose education is particularly emphasized. It is in this context that the possibility of a peaceful living together of Muslims and non-Muslims is envisaged. Interestingly, however, both Molla Abbas and the inhabitants of the Land of Serenity seem to believe that the future cohabitation, this new *convivencia*, is enabled by the spread of Enlightenment ideals in Christendom.

At an argumentative level, Molla Abbas' various interlocutors stress the continuity between the Land of Serenity and al-Andalus at its height. Indeed, in the past the Franks came from Europe to study in the schools of al-Andalus and eventually 'the Muslims of al-Andalus contributed greatly to the emergence of the new civilization of Europe' (Gaspıralı 2003, 178), a reference to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment which ultimately brought an end to religious intolerance and persecution. Thus, Gasprinsky's utopia looks back to an idealized age in order to dream up the future cohabitation of Muslims and non-Muslims united in the pursuit of science. But, importantly, this backward look is not towards a lost paradise. The Land of Serenity is the product of human agency, the same way the rise and fall of al-Andalus had been.

There is a major contrast between the space for dialogue and interreligious cohabitation that Gasprinsky's utopia foresees and early Ottoman Turkish science fiction texts with utopian features, all of them posterior to Gasprinsky's first published version. Those texts strove towards the ethnoreligious homogenization of society and often displayed a discourse that was very critical of European imperialism (Uyanık 2013). Ottoman Muslim authors such as Molla Davudzâde Mustafa Nâzım and Hasan Ruşeni [Barkin] (1884–1953), who produced utopian science fiction narratives published on the eve of the First World War, were members of a Muslim majority society in an age of rising ethno-nationalism in the Ottoman heartlands and in the context of the growing threat of Western encroachment. Gasprinsky on the other hand was leading the struggle for political empowerment and emancipation of Turkic and other Muslims in a Christian majority Empire. His minoritarian status goes a long way to explain the emphasis that he puts on his desire for a harmonious living-together of various communities in a diverse society and of different nations on a shared planet.

Notably religious, or perhaps ethnoreligious oppression seems to have been the trigger for the utopian quest. Gasprinsky's novel is not the only text of the era where persecution leads to utopian imaginings that created space for multireligious cohabitation. It is worthwhile remembering that Feride Banu had mentioned both the suffering of the Muslims and of the Jews during the Reconquista and thus emphasized the role of religious oppression. Endemic antisemitism in Europe had also led some Jewish writers to engage with utopian fiction. Theodor Herzl's (1860–1904) novel *Altneuland* (Old New Land, 1902) is also triggered by the flight from oppression at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century (Herzl 2007, 65). Published six years, after his ground-breaking pamphlet *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State), *Altneuland* imagines a new state in the historic land of Israel – the old new land – which has become prosperous, has a thriving cooperative economy, promoting science and technology while being a free, just and pluralist society in which Jews and Arabs, as well as various minorities have equal rights and equal opportunities. 'As far as religion goes, you will find Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, and Brahmin houses of worship near our own synagogues' explains one of the main Jewish characters of the novel (Herzl 2007, 67). Another outspoken advocate of the new society turns out to be a Muslim Arab who reminds his Christian European interlocutors that he 'did not learn tolerance in the Occident. We Moslems have always had better relations with the Jews than you Christians' (Herzl 2007, 125). This digression via Herzl's coeval novel shows that both the minoritarian status of the author and the experience of marginalization and oppression of their communities give rise to utopian narratives that create space for imagining religiously and ethnically plural societies, that also tolerate dissent.

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