

Presentation of H. Millas in the workshop "Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory: 'Multiculturalism' as a Literary Theme after 1980", 08.-09.12.2006, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen

Constructing Memories of 'Multiculturalism' and Identities

In the Turkish Novels

The validity of an argumentation

The difficulty in discussing a trend and/or a theme in any national literature is the same: how can one verify the validity of his selections when he presents texts which 'show' (and suppose to 'prove') ones' argumentation? How may one prove that the presented texts are of a significant importance and not marginal and ephemeral 'exceptions'? One solution to this problematic is almost evident: The texts should not be 'selected' but all the texts should be taken into consideration or at least a considerable number of texts should be selected so that the statistical conclusions can have legitimacy, being 'representative'. However, in the case of the novels technical limitations come into the agenda. There are hundreds of novels published every year and it is impossible for a researcher to follow up all developments.

This difficulty has not been surmounted in this presentation. In a previous review of the Turkish novel and the related 'identities' I had a greater assurance about my research not only because many novels were investigated (about 400) but because at that time the number of those investigated novels was a higher percentage of the published novels (Millas 2000, 2001 and 2005). Whereas the last 20-25 years the number of the novels increased manifolds and consequently the examples in this presentation constitute a smaller section of the whole

production. A second shortcoming of this presentation is that in my previous investigation the novels were selected randomly and therefore the statistical results may be considered more representative of the whole, whereas in this present one the novels were selected mostly because of the theme which they incorporated, i.e., 'multiculturalism'. The following presentation should be read having these reservations in mind.

A demarcation line in 1980?

A second methodological consideration, beyond the one of 'validity' just mentioned, is the *comparison*

of the two periods, before and after 1980, as prescribed in the general title of this workshop. The 'after' can be approached only if there is a 'before' in mind. Whereas there are not enough studies on the Turkish novels related to issues such as 'cultural memory', 'identities' and 'multiculturalism' which cover various periods. Therefore, to discuss the period *after 1980*

may mean that a) it is assumed that there is a demarcation around that period – an assumption which is not demonstrated, and/or b) the focus of interest is limited to the period after 1980 and a comparison – before and after - is not looked for.

In my presentation I will not take for granted the 'demarcation', nor will I ignore some major changes (developments) that I believe to exist in the Turkish novel the last decades. I will try to show that there have always been issues of 'multiculturalism', 'cultural memory' and 'identity' in the Turkish novel and that this interest presents tendencies of a change the last years in tune with the change of the historical and social developments.

Memory and multiculturalism before 1980

The Ottomanists

The novels of the Ottoman period published in Turkish, written by authors such as Şemsettin Sami, Ahmet Mithat, Samipaşazade Sezai, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Recaizade Mahmut, were

'multicultural' in a specific way: they reflected the spirit of a multinational, multi-ethnic empire. They were not national. The Christian characters for example were numerous in those novels and at the same time a 'normal' part of the immediate environment; they were the constituents of the story, an organic part of the society and almost never the 'Other'. They were not portrayed as 'negative'. On the contrary they often symbolized the 'civilized' and 'advanced' West.

[\[1\]](#)

These novels do not give emphasis to the past and consequently nor to 'memory'. They are mostly involved with the present and the future. Not nostalgia but a feeling of yearning is apparent in many cases: the authors are for a society and for human relations that bring to mind the 'West' – as it is imagined at that time by these writers. The Christian heroes quite often are shown as the representatives of such a society. In other words, the 'difference' between the Christians and the Muslims is not ignored but this dissimilarity is not a reason either for confrontation or for disapproval. [\[2\]](#)

The nationalists

The appearance of the national/nationalist authors and the abrupt 'disappearance' of the Ottoman authors should be interpreted as a shift of paradigm. The Ottoman writers perceived the world (and the related identities - 'us' and the Other) to consist of parts that were characterized as civilized/uncivilized, as east/west, as Ottoman/non-Ottoman, and probably secondarily as Muslim/Christian. The numerous 'national' authors and novels that appeared after 1908 and especially with the founding of the new Turkish nation state heralded a new understanding. The world was perceived to consist of 'nations' and the national identity had to be reinforced with reference to a heroic or at least 'valuable' past. 'Cultural memory' came to the forefront and the 'past' was associated mostly with the recent past referring to the period

1910-1923 (by the Kemalist nationalists) or with an 'ancient' past (by nationalists influenced by racist understanding). Authors like Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Halide Edip Adivar, Atilla İlhan belong to the first group and Nihal Atsız, Turhan Tan can be associated with the second.

These writers were distanced from a multicultural culture; actually they were xenophobic. The non-Muslim minorities were perceived not only as the 'enemy of the nation' but also ethically inferior *vis a vis* the superior, brave, strong, honest, magnanimous 'us', too. All Greeks, for example, were portrayed negatively in those novels. [3] A national identity was founded on the existence of the dangerous, treacherous, appalling, etc. Other. This school of nationalist thought describes a world of ethnic strife where the Other is an eternal opponent that should be kept at a distance if not exterminated.

The Marxists

In the late 1940s and in the 1950s a new school appeared which can be labeled brusquely as 'Marxists'. These authors can be seen more as 'internationalists' rather than as multiculturalists. For them the world consists of classes (not nations or religious groups) and quite often they portrayed the minorities, especially the Greeks, as 'modern' and exemplary since they were advanced in a 'class struggle' against the common enemy, e.i., the capitalists. (Naturally the Greeks were fighting in Greece but the Greek of Istanbul were perceived as associated with them.) They were not only 'anti-nationalists' but most importantly against their own 'state', too. This 'distancing' themselves from the official and dominant center of authority and power appears as closeness to the minorities that have been already marginalized.

The appearance of the Marxists and their positioning with respect to the Other – the Greeks and the non-Muslim minorities in general – is an expression of an identity. An identification with a world movement that transcended the national boundaries and the portrayal of a new enemy – a class – meant the negation of the national identity as that was presented by the new state. Authors that can be associated with this approach are Sabahattin Ali, Nazım Hikmet, Orhan Kemal, Suat Derviş, Vedat Türkali, Mehmet Kemal, Fakir Baykurt

and many others.

The ‘humanists’

The above mentioned ‘Ottomanists’, ‘nationalists’ and ‘Marxists’ are relatively easy to detect because they are related to some schools of thought that have been extensively studied. The two additional groups of authors that are associated to multiculturalism and cultural memory, namely what I choose here to call ‘humanists’ and ‘Anatolianists’, are more difficult to distinguish for three reasons. First, they represent a complex and/or sophisticated manner of belief, second, they are indirectly associated at various degrees with the above mentioned three ‘schools of thought’ and third, they have not been studied to a satisfactory extent.

The ‘humanists’ resemble the Ottomanists and one may even claim that they represent a non-declared Ottomanism. Reşat Nuri Güntekin for example, not so much in his openly declared ideological ‘official’ choices, e.i., his attachment to the ideology of the new nation-state, but rather through the deconstruction of his texts which portray the non-Muslim minorities with a big affection and sympathy, seems to represent a nostalgic author who contemplates a lost world of multiculturalism, an Ottoman past. In all of his fifteen novels that have been investigated this tendency is apparent (Millas, 2000, pp. 173-179). The non-Muslim minorities are approached with empathy and love. The difference with the Ottomanists is in his nostalgic dimension. It is as if the time and the world have changed and the past has acquired a melancholic dimension of yearning. Especially

Akşam Güneşi

(1926) and

Ateş Gecesi

(1942)

are typical examples of his nostalgic atmosphere.

... bir hüznle etrafımdaki kızlar arasında Stamatula'yı, Rina'yı, Maryanti'yi ve Piça'yı aramaya başladım. Kapalı ceket, saçsız baş ve pos bıyıkları ile Muhtar Lefter Efendi'ye benzeyen bir

ihthiyar Rum’un karşısında, arkası bana dönük siyah bir zayıf kadından gözümü ayıramıyor, başını çevirirse Vardar Dudu’nun süzgün anemik çehresini, yüzüne yapışık döğme burnunu göreceğimi zannederek heyecanlanıyordum (Ateş Gecesi, pp. 248).

In his *Kavak Yelleri* (p. 297) he narrates how he enjoyed a calm night ‘in a poor vicinity of Beyoglu with a poor Greek family’ and how he sang together with a bookseller named Sokrat, a priest and some Greek ladies. These people have ‘nothing in common with the people I had met years ago in my town, Kara bağlı Yenge, Ablalar, Müstü, and so many others. In spite of that, I felt a serenity during that night that I spent with them, and I do not understand why’.

1906 born Sait Faik Abasıyanık was seventeen years younger than Reşat Nuri and he could not remember the ‘multi-ethnic’ Ottoman environment and probably therefore he expresses less a ‘nostalgia’ and more a sympathy for the ‘poor’ members of the minorities; in this respect he resembles rather the Marxists.

He yearns for a world where all, irrespective of one’s religion and ethnicity will live in peace: ‘I love not the flags but the human beings’

. For him all human beings, especially if they are the non-privileged deserve his love:

‘Gözüm ... çürük tekneleri, balıkçı kayıklarını ışığın aydınlattığı taraftadır. Benim insanlarım o taraftadır. Kalafat oradadır. Vasilaki oradadır. Hasan oradadır’ . (Bitmemiş Senfoni, p. 45).

There are many authors that may be classified under this category. Haldun Taner, Necati Cumalı, Bilge Karasu, Ahmet Atan, Oya Baydar and many others. They share some characteristics. The most important is that they are all

critical, directly or indirectly, to the policy of the Turkish state

vis a vis

the non-Muslim minorities. In this respect they resemble the Marxists, too. On the other hand they do not perceive only 'classes' but they are well aware of the existence of ethnic differentiations; and they respect this 'difference'.

The 'Anatolianists'

Maybe the non-acceptance of the right to exist as 'different' is the main characteristic that distinguishes the authors that I call 'Anatolianists': they stress and praise the 'sameness' and the 'resemblance' of the Other with 'us', in other words equating the Other with 'us'. And at the same time however, constructing a new negative Other: the West. This tendency also resembles one aspect of Ottomanism (the demarcation line being drawn between our sovereign area and the 'West') and one aspect of the 'humanists' (considering 'part of us' sections of the society that were seen as the Other by the nationalists).

The 'Anatolianists' have been perceived by the Turkish historians of literature either as 'humanists' (for example Halikarnas Balıkcısı) or as Marxists (for example Kemal Tahir). They constitute however together with many other authors such as Hassan İzzettin Dinamo, Y

Imaz Karakoyunlu etc., a group of intellectuals who, partly unconsciously, propagate a new Turkish national identity based on a historico-geographical understanding. They perceive the 'self' as Anatolian geographically and the heir of all civilizations of this area historically. Neither the ethnic, nor the cultural dimension, nor the self-identification of the citizens of old and modern Turkey are taken into consideration in this construction. Turks are all who belong to 'this geography' and who have automatically inherited past civilizations, irrespective of religion, language etc.

This 'identity project' has been appropriated and highlighted by politicians, historians and other intellectuals, too. Turgut Özal in his book written only in French and English mentions Halikarnas Balıkcısı to demonstrate that Turkey is 'European' (Özal, pp. 21). Bozkurt Güvenç in his *Türk Kimliği*

propagates similar views (Bozkurt). Historians like İdris Küçükömer and Sencer Divitçioğlu flirted with the idea of Asiatic Mode of Production (Küçükömer, Divitçioğlu)

At first glance this 'identity project' appears innocent and with good intentions. It incorporates however, many contradictions, nationalistic characteristics and weaknesses in not being persuasive. It first appeared at a time that the Asia based 'Turkish Historical Thesis' was en vogue - and which claimed – that all ancient civilizations and therefore all Middle East and Aegean civilizations were created by the Turks that came from Asia. Anatolianists reject the Asiatic basis and develop the idea that the modern Turks are the heir of all civilizations of the area. Actually they answer the question 'Who are we?' The answer is 'we are the same', we are all Turks, Anatolians, irrespective of our religion, language, beliefs etc. A new national coherence is proposed based on a geographical basis. Of course the 'differences' are obscured, hidden and masked.

In the novels the above identity project is presented as follows. The non-Muslims and especially the Greeks (the 'Rums' to be precise) are parts of 'us', they are however, 'exempt' from their communal characteristics: they like the Turks more than the members of their own community, they prefer to live under the Ottoman and Turkish rule rather than the Byzantine or the Greek one, quite often and especially the women hurry to be converted to Islam, they present a tendency to fall in love with the Turks, they confess that the Greeks (the Christians, the Grecophones) have been unjust to the Turks whereas the Turks have been magnanimous, just and tolerant to them. The Pax Ottomana (or rather Pax Turcica) directly or indirectly comes into sight.

At the same time the West is presented with very negative characteristic. In Halikarnas Balıkcısı
Almost all the Westerners are negative: mean, sadistic etc. A typical novel is *Turgut Reis* (1966). In the case of Kemal Tahir the negative West is 'explained' with a Marxist model – the Asiatic Mode of Production. The West is historically associated with feudalism, an authoritative ruling class and state that 'exploited' the masses. The Turks and all the other Anatolians lived under a protective state (*Devlet Ana*) without exploitation, oppression or tyranny. The East and the West are two worlds completely apart.

In other words, the main constituents of the nationalistic discourse repeat themselves: we are good they are negative. The non-Muslim characters undertake the role to demonstrate this. In the novels they 'confirm' the above either by their actions and choices or by their utterances. I call this positive Other 'naively positive Other', because he/she is a very special case of a positive Other.

The Anatolianist discourse incorporates silences and contradictions. The ancient civilizations are accepted as 'ours' but with the provision that they are not associated with 'existing' nations. The Greek aspect of Ionian civilization is securely silenced and the Armenians are normally 'forgotten'. Homer for example, according to this discourse, is more an 'Anatolian compatriot' than an Ancient Greek poet. The legacy of the 'more recent' thousand years of Byzantine Empire is silenced too. The 'non-European' ethnic groups of Anatolia, like the Arabs and the Kurds and especially Islam are 'forgotten' when the legacy is discussed.

What however, distinguishes the Anatolianists from the 'Ottomanists', the 'Marxists' and the 'Humanists' mentioned above, is their political view *vis a vis* the West and the 'Turkish state'. The Ottomanists were admirers of the West. The Marxists and the Humanists were very critical to the 'state', especially to the way it treated the non-Muslim minorities. On the contrary the Anatolianists, used different approaches to show that the Turkish state, at the end of the day, was 'positive'. When these differences are taken into consideration, the Anatolianists appear to be closer to the nationalists who praise whatever is 'Turkish', but they seem to be rather in need of a more 'European' façade, creating an idyllic imagined national past and a new historical Other, not the internal enemy but the West in this case.

Memory and multiculturalism after 1980

I discussed the period *before* 1980 and especially the 'Anatolianists' so that the period *after* 1980 may be better approached. Some tendencies pertaining to multiculturalism, cultural memory, national identity and the Other continued almost unchanged after 1980 and until our days. First these persisting approaches will be mentioned shortly and then the major changes will be discussed.

The enduring nationalist approach

That a common nationalist approach still appears in the Turkish novels should be considered normal since this ideology is widespread. What is more interesting is that sometimes nationalism is expressed by authors who, from their own point of view, are 'humanitarians', they seek 'coexistence', 'multiculturalism' and 'understanding' between nations. These texts give the impression that they are the result of writers that have been carried away by uncontrolled anger, fear, and nationalistic stereotypes. The dilemma from the point of view of the critic lies in his decision either to respect the self image of the author or to analyze the text. Actually this catch-22 situation applies to all texts that follow.

The difficulty with the 'nationalist' approach is that there is not a consensus as of how this paradigm operates. Nationalism, irrespective of what 'it is', expresses itself as follows: it draws a world of 'nations' in strife, the 'continuation' of these ethnic groups within time is assumed and therefore the 'character' of the parties present an endurance to change, and 'our' side – expressed by selected heroes in the novels – is better than the Other. [\[4\]](#)

The novels of Ahmet Yorulmaz written in 1997-2003 (see bibliography) present these characteristics and the Greeks and the Turks are shown to have been involved in a fight that started thousands of years ago. Even though the first impression is that the main theme of these books is to sketch an identity of 'Turks from Girit/Crete', at least what is voiced is a return to 'homeland'. The novel of Ahmet Coral too (*Izmir*), presents a 'Greek' that from the times of Byzantines until today lives with the nationalistic hate and urge to harm the Turks. In *Şu Çılgın Türkler*

of Turgut Özakman

the Armenians and the Greeks (Rums), apart from where each ethnic stereotypical hero is being positioned in the general confrontational frame of the novel, they are presented as natural collaborators with the enemy (

Özakman, p. 171)

. A Turkish hero reminds to an Armenian the 'benevolent', 'just' and 'moral' Ottoman/Turkish state: the theme 'you have been treated well by

us

, we lived together happily, whereas

you

behaved like traitors' is repeated, as it was done in almost all nationalist novels published before and/or after 1980. In these novels there is not any criticism towards 'our' side.

The minority on the minority: a continuance

The presence of the minority writers in Turkish literature is marginal but still important in revealing and illuminating the role of ethnic identity in dealing with the Other. The voicing of certain issues that concern the minorities, the portrayal of the minority members themselves and especially the 'sexual love' relationship between the members of ethnic groups are unique in these literary texts. The Armenian Zaven Biberyan as early as in 1966 presented for the first time a love affair between a 'Turk' and a minority member where the man was not the Turk but an Armenian (this hero is beaten to death for that!). This taboo theme repeats itself in almost all of the very few minority authors. Kriton Dinçmen in his *Symponia Kakophonica* (1992) repeats the theme. In this case the Muslim girl who loves a Christian, Mehpeyker, goes mad. The theme is repeated in

Lu

napark

(2005) of Mario Levi, but in this case the relationship of the Jew with the Turkish girl seems more acceptable – but one wonders if her having a Cretan origin infers something (p. 98).

[\[5\]](#)

Another peculiarity of the 'minority' texts is the noticeable critical position they express *vis a vis*

the Turkish state and society and especially with respect to some unpleasant events such as the 'Tax on wealth' of 1942 and the 'enlistment' of the same period, etc., themes which are rare in the Turkish literature. In general a concealed and hesitant protest is felt in these texts. Also a very rare depiction of a 'poor Jew' is noticed in a text of a Jew, probably for the first time since

Sait Faik: he is seen in Mario Levi's
Bir Şehre Gidememek.

A nostalgic past of the 'lost' minorities is also felt in these texts. Mıgırdıç Margosyan and Mario Levi repeat this theme. Especially M. Levi refers to the Greeks/Rums that they have left Istanbul with nostalgia. 'Rum meyhaneleri' are nostalgic for example in *En Güzel Hikayemiz* (1992, pp. 20, 63). Nostalgia appears even as a title of a novel: *Madame Floridis Dönmeyebilir*.

This question of 'nostalgia' for the 'vanished' minorities (or the Other) is a theme that is directly connected to 'multiculturalism', 'memory' and the Other. The issue will be discussed below, but for the moment two questions related to this discourse will be put:

a) many 'groups' have been gone and are non-existent in Istanbul and in Turkey any more (as it is the case all around the world since things 'change'). Why is it the Greeks the ones that are mostly 'chosen' to voice the 'nostalgia' of the lost past?

b) This nostalgia seems to be associated with something 'positive' and 'good' that is gone. What was positive with the Greeks apart from some secondary capabilities, as for example their capacity in running a tavern? This was never explained or shown.

A rupture after 1980: New Identities (Islamists, Kurds, Religious orders)

Islamic sentiments, a related 'legacy' and 'way of life', mostly as a kind of esthetics and philosophical preference, were present in the Turkish novel from the time of Namık Kemal,

Peyami Safa, Semiha Ayverdi, Münevver Ayaşlı, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. As it is not easy to draw a line between Turkish nationalist and Turkish-Islamic identity, it is not easy to separate the 'Islamic' novel from the nationalist one, either. The difference lies to the extent that one identity is emphasized more than the other.

The visible rift with the past appears with *Minyeli Abdullah* (1968) of İsmail Hekimoğlu, where he narrates the persecution that a believer Muslim faces – in a 'foreign' country. Especially after 1980 a new (not qualitatively distinguished) 'school' of Islamic novel found a very broad body of readers. Writers like Yavuz Bahadıroğlu, Afet İlgez, Ali Kavaklı, Mustafa Miyasoğlu, Emine Şenlikoğlu and many others appeared and voiced not only the discontent – according to their point of view – of a suppressed religious community, but also a new religious but also political identity. In these novels the political agenda was strongly felt: criticism of the past governments and choices and comparisons with other countries with respect to religious matters were abundant.

However, the Islamic novels do not actually constitute a unity because they present many differentiations. Some are against Christians and 'socialists' (Hekimoğlu), whereas Afet İlgez, and many others, seem to preach a kind of 'Islamic socialism'. Others condemn the Christian and Jewish 'capital' that harms 'us' (Şenlikoğlu). Bahadıroğlu refers to Saudi Nursi and Kavaklı praises the Germans - who in his novel

Alman Doktor

are converted (willingly of course) to Islam. Miyaso

ğlu

in his

Güzel Ölüm

exalts deaths (martyrdom) that occurred when the Greek troops captured Cyprus.

Hurşit İlbeyi –

who is half Turkmen and half Kurdish -

in his

Berzan,

criticizes the state, defends the idea of a socialistic Islam, praises democracy, NGOs and freedom of expression. In these novels the theme of 'multiculturalism' and/or the non-Muslim minorities rarely appear. These authors do not seem to be aware of similar issues. It is not very clear what an Islamic novel is; in spite of the fact that the Islamic bookshops are full of such novels that can not be found in the 'laïque' bookshops. They are not however, in line with the state and the general state discourse.

What is more clear is a series of novels that appeared (or at least that I noticed) mostly after 2000 and where suppressed identities are expressed. These may be called novels of the (third generation) 'muhacir' – emigrants, refugees. This 'school' does not seem to have predecessors and the novels are the really unique original product of 'after 2000'. Their voice is one of protest against non-recognition of different religious and/or cultural identities and communities and they express a critical position against the state policies. In a sense they remind the 'novels of the minorities' and of the Islamists, only they seem to be more outspoken than the minorities and more sporadic than the Islamists.

Ayten Aygen in her *Rumeli Benimdi* narrates a Bektaşî and Melami past of her family. She praises Ottomanism even though the whole family was devastated (actually massacred) by the ruling Ottomans. This is a novel of a great trauma. Ali Ezger

Özyürek with his

Muhacirler

'declares', with pride one would say, his Bekta

şı

identity. The family has come from the Balkans but they were repressed in Anatolia for years.

'They watched the entrances of their new village to be able to perform their religious (prohibited) ceremonies' (p. 173). He states that the prejudices that previously were targeted against the Greeks and the Armenians now they had turned against them, against the migrants. He clearly states that they felt at home at their Balkan state, which he calls 'European' and not in Turkey.

These novels voice an anti-nationalist protest, too. Nationalist practices are condemned to the point of a 'blasphemy'. Zeliha Midilli in her *Balkan Şarkısı – Saranda*, where she narrates the Bektaşî life of her family,

note the following sentences which are unheard in Turkish literature from the time of

Vatan Yahut Silistre

(1873) until this moment:

Ezelden beri sevmedim şu vatan tabirini. Memleket tabirini şahsen daha sempatik bulurum... Vatan kendini bizden üstün bir mertebeye koyar ve icap ederse onun için ölmemizi emreder... Ama insanoğlunun vatani vardır, o da bütün toprakların üstüdür, yani insanoğlunun vatani dünyadır... Hür olmanın kendi devletine sahip olmakla alakası yoktur (281, 140).

According to this novel life in Albania was one of perfect 'freedom'. The dervishes would

visit and pray in the churches and the Christians would visit the 'tekke's': 'God is not a Muslim, a Christian, a Jew or of any other religion' (p. 178).

The novel of Saba Altınsay *Kritimu – Girit'im Benim* (with a surprising title in Greek) is dedicated to 'all Cretans'. Her novel (2004) is the first Turkish novel with a story solely developing in Crete, narrating the story of the Greek speaking Muslims who had been 'exchanged' with the 'Greeks' of Anatolia in 1923. The story is based on the family history of the writer and is narrated with sincerity, objectivity and nostalgia for a lost co-existence. Necati Cumal with his *Viran Dağlar – Makedonya 1900* (1995) had opened the way in telling stories of 'old homelands'.

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Apart from the above, i.e., the novels that narrate and present suppressed identities with reference to areas outside present-day borders of Turkey, two additional identities are the Kurdish and the one of Karamanlis. Two novels show the new interest in this field.

Yaşar Kemal with his three volume novel *Bir Ada Hikayesi* (1998-2002) which deserves a more thorough analysis than the very short one here, presents for the first time in his career a Kurdish national discourse. The Greek and Kurdish heroes are shown to 'live in these lands for three and five thousand years' (for example pp. 1/50, 267). The thousand-year-identity is repeated in the novel. As for the Greeks, a distinction is made between the Rums and the Greeks, as it is the case with the 'Anatolians': the Rums (which are shown to belong to 'us') join the Turkish army and fight against the Greeks. But still they are expelled to Greece for an unexplained reason and by agents that are not defined.

Nurten Ertul's *Kimlik – Osmanlı Topraklarında 700 yıllık yaşam ve köklerimiz* (2006) is about the Karamanlis, the Turkish speaking Orthodox Christians who lived in central Anatolia and were 'exchanged' with the 'Turks' of Greece in 1923 – in fact partly with the Greek speaking Muslims mentioned in the novel of S. Alt

I
nsay referred above. Some cases of injustice done to this community and some cases of conversion to Islam are mentioned, inferring a multi-cultural legacy in Anatolia: ‘

Rome

, *Byzantium, the Seljuks and the Ottomans ruled this place. Turkey is the synthesis of all these civilizations’*

(124). At the end the Karamanlis are sent to Greece. The author describes the legacy of the area as follows: ‘The Ottoman Empire was a mosaic of many groups of various languages, religions and races’ (p. 198). The need to be aware of one’s identity is stressed (p. 45) and the Karamanlis are presented as the real ‘local’ people of Turkey (p. 222).

In *Makriköy’e Dönüş* of Selçuk Erez a story of family highlights a Balkan identity. Ethnic identity appears as secondary when then the lives of ‘concrete’ characters are narrated.

G

iritli Gelin

of Yılmaz Ünlü (2005)

is about the turbulent period of Anatolia at the beginning of the 20

th

century, where Turks, Armenians, Kurds, Alevis, Gypsies, Jews, Greeks, S

ü

ryanis and others live, love each other but also fight due to nationalistic ideologies. Indirectly, a multi-cultural Anatolia and some taboo issues, such as the killing of Armenians, are presented and accepted (p. 44, 221).

When I was writing this paper (12/2006) I have been informed by a writer that a novel about the Gürcü (Gregorians) of Turkey is about to be published. Also Hakan Aytekin’s book in English, Turkish and Süryani language is a herald of a new interest in a ‘forgotten’ identity of Anatolia. The appearance of a related novel should not be seen as a surprise.

Indirect Cosmopolitanism

There is an indirect way of presenting cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and a corresponding identity. Drawing such a frame and telling such a story without stressing the enterprise itself may be an indirect way. Placing the setting of the novel in a ‘foreign’ country or

environment and at the same time 'accepting' it as your 'own' may be a perfect way of voicing indirectly a 'cosmopolitan' preference. Bilge Karasu and his *Uzun Sürmüş Bir Günün Akşamı* (1970) and Sevgi Soysal and her

Tante Rosa

(1968) can be reminded.

The first is about Byzantium the second about a German. Maybe the best example of this genre is set by

Aslı Erdoğan and her

Kabuk Adam

(1994) and

Kırmızı Perelinli Kent

(1998).

The story takes place in Brazil but the narrator is a Turk. The plot of the novels and the 'narrations' of Demir Özlü take place in Istanbul but in various countries in Europe, too. Elif Şafak

(who writes in English) narrates stories of United States (

Araf

) and of Istanbul/France/Siberia (

Mahrem

). Orhan Pamuk too, narrates a story where (national and religious) identities intermingled (

Beyaz Kale

).

The 'indirect' cosmopolitanism may be also seen as the 'most' genuine of its sort because it is not planned to be so, it is spontaneous, it is created without even being the intention of the author. The choice made by the author itself is an indication of the mood of the writer. He/she professes an interest in the 'foreign' and in the 'different' at the very initial stage: when he/she decides to write about such an environment. It is of interest that a Turkish critic, Erdal Öz, perceives

Tante Rosa,

something like a 'translated text' because it passes in a 'foreign' environment. Actually E.

Öz

describes an aspect of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.

Another example of indirect way of expressing a preference for 'multiculturalism' and bringing forward 'memories' of such a period is seen in the novel *Kar* of Orhan Pamuk. The story passes in Kars (an eastern city of Turkey), which was once densely populated by

Armenians. Pamuk does not mention them but, en passant, he describes locations referring to and mentioning old Armenian buildings. He does this more than twenty times in 400 pages, i.e., once every 20 pages.

Orhan Pamuk has expressed his views about the issue of 'multiculturalism. In an interview published in the Greek newspaper Elefrotipia (15.1.1999) he said the following:

'I want to finish with a highly personal tone. Lately many seem to have learned what the multi-cultural society is and they refer with nostalgia to the minorities that have left the country due to the policy of the Turkish state. I would have an understanding for this provided it is the outcome of sincerity. However, I believe that this nostalgia exists together with a kitsch nostalgia which is not seen in any other society in this magnitude. The only thing that I have to say with respect to the Greeks, the Armenians and the Jews is that starting from my youth all my memories are related to them. Their non-existence now is like the non-existence of my youth. I would like to express some day my personal memories, but I do not want to make this in the manner that I have just mentioned.'

The Greeks in the Turkish Novels

Statistically and in general the Greeks appear roughly in every three Turkish novels out of four (Millas, 2005, p. 315-318). After 1980 and especially the last ten years the non-Muslims and especially the Greeks became a theme that has many dimensions: the period and the 'place' in which the Other is shown, the role that he plays in politics, in forming a part or not of 'us', the related role of 'our' part (our state for example) in the plot and in the results, the relationship between the Other and our identity (national or local), the role and character of the 'women of the Other' are some of these dimensions. Few of these issues are dealt with below.

'Living together' in 'old times'

This theme is more systematically presented in the novels of Gürsel Korat (*Zaman Yeli* and *Güvercin Ağıt*).

The general message is that the people of Anatolia in the middle ages lived next to each other, they were intermingled and they shared ideas, ideals and beliefs. Care is being taken to show that these people did not have a national identity or a related bias. These novels sketch a 'different' period.

A similar approach is seen in *Börklüce* of Bilge Umar, where Muslims, Christians, Jews and others – often with anachronistic tendencies – fight against 'injustice'. In some passages the coexistence is exalted: The Turks treat the local people very 'friendly' and the 'Turks' marry the 'local' girls (p. 12). There is a tension however, between the 'natural' inclinations for friendly coexistence of the local people (Muslims and Others) and those who represent the state and the authorities. In the end the 'people' lose and their revolt is suppressed. Anachronism is seen in the *Başkesen* of Nedim Gürsel where 'Turks' and 'Byzantines' live next to each other in the 15th century.

The theme of a 'historical' peaceful coexistence is a recurrent theme that appears as the main one or in passing. In Orhan Pamuk's *Benim Adım Kırmızı* various ethnicities like the Jews and the Greeks appear in passing as an integral part of the story. In a single passage for example, one may read the following names: Jews, Çerkes, Kıpçak, Acem, Türkmen, Abaza, Ermeni, Cenevizli, Süryani (p. 173).

The same approach is seen in

Amat

of

İhsan Oktay Anar.

Starting from the first page we see that in the 17th

th

century in Istanbul a mosque is next to an Armenian and to a Greek-Orthodox church. Nearby is the tower of the Genovese. A kind of cosmopolitanism is apparent, even though a Jew is shown

to be very similar to Shylock of Shakespeare (p.11).

What is new in these novels is not the ‘coexistence’ part. This theme had been seen in the novels of the ‘nationalists’ and especially the ‘Anatolianists’ mentioned above. In this case the part of ‘ours’ is not directly exalted; it is indirectly stated, inferred or silenced and even sometimes doubted. Another general characteristic of this ‘historical’ theme is that there is not an end to the story. What happened afterwards? This question is not asked or answered. How and why the coexistence came to a halt? How nationalism created a new and controversial relationship? This problematic is ignored. These questions are rather answered in Kemal Anadol’s *Büyük Ayrılık*:

‘Evvela koyu bir milliyetçilik şırınga ettiler. Bizim Rumlar ile Ermeniler Dünya Harbi’nde bunu doruk noktasına çıkardılar. Tehlikeli bir silah bu milliyetçilik. Hemen karşısını doğuruyor. Jön Türkler de zaten hazırды buna! Megali İdea mı? Karşısında Turan, Kızıllema! İsyan mı? Al sana tehcir! (s.517). ‘Çağın tarihini yazacak olanlar, milliyetçiliğin insanlığa, veremden, vebadan, koleradan da çok zarar verdiğini tespit edecekler... Çünkü milliyetçilik, bulaşıcı, tehlikeli ve ölümcül bir hastalıktır. Ve azı çoğu yoktur bu hastalığın! Az olması tehlikesini azaltmaz’ (520). Ve Kaptan Petridis konuşuyor: ‘Karşılıklı kan döktük... Milliyetçilik yüzünden! Bize, karşı sahillerden bulaştı bu hastalık. Bizden de Türklere!’ (s. 547).

Nostalgia and Multiculturalism

There are many novels that can be classified under this general title even though there are

many differences between the 'spirit' of each, which means that this present general classification will do injustice to the efforts. Some novels published the last 10-20 years and that narrate stories about the Greeks of Turkey (mostly of Istanbul) will be presented first. They are all characterized with a nostalgia for the non-Muslims and mostly the Greeks that are 'gone'. These novels can be seen to consist of two categories:

a) One group, with a willingness of 'self-criticism', blames the Turkish side (the state or the community) for the negative outcome. Some of these authors voice their criticism softly whereas others with emphasis and even developing an explanation for that, mostly blaming 'nationalism' and

b) The second voice nostalgia but do not get involved in the causes.

These two kinds of novels are encountered before 1980 too. Sait Faik and Reşat Nuri are examples of these two tendencies. There are many authors of this 'school' in the Turkish literature. After 1980 however, the frequency and the 'self-criticism' increased. Demir Özlü, for example, from the seventies until recently refers quite often to the Greeks that have been 'badly treated' and left. In his

Bir Küçükburjuvanın Gençlik Yılları

a
complain
is
voiced: '

This is the vicinity where the old Greek (Rum) minority lived. The Greeks are getting less and less. They move to Athens. Now a middle class (esnaf) that comes from Anatolia replace them' (p.166). The historical Christian buildings are turning to ruins and instead new areas '

like a stain of grease'

are spreading '

taking something from the inner self'

of the hero (p.168). In

Bir Yaz Mevsimi Romansı

again the change in the area of Tatavla (Kurtulus) is mentioned: There was once a nice place with well dressed Greek ladies, etc. (p. 56). The same nostalgia is voiced about

Beyoğlu

and

Panayot who used to sell wine in

Tatlı Bir Eylül

(p. 50).

Feride Çiçekoğlu’s *Suyun Öteki Yanı* is about a Greek from Greece and about the Greeks of Istanbul who have ‘gone’. The nostalgic song ‘Samniotisa’ is mentioned a few times in the novel. Everything is seen so far away now! Oya Baydar too, mentions the Greeks who have left in her *Hiçbiryer’e Dönüş* (p. 50 etc). She wrote also *Erguv*

an Kapısı

where

she also blames the Turkish ‘nationalists’ for this (p. 26). She repeats the theme of D. Özlü: ‘*Giden Rum nüfusun yerine de Doğulular, Kürtler almış anlaşıldığı kadarıyla... Rakı içelim de ne olacak bu memleketin hali diye efkarlanalım*’ (p. 312).

The theme of ‘the Greeks that left’ and the following ‘catastrophe’ is expressed in Yiğit Okur’s

Hulki Bey ve Arkadaşları

with a special emphasis:

‘1955 Eylülü’nün 6’ıncı gecesi ırzına geçilene dek (bin yıldan bu yana bu kent bakirdi). Türk’ü, Müslüman’ı, Katoliğ’i, Latin’i, Ortodoks’u, Musevi’si, Ermeni’si, Rum’u, hepsi bir başka telden çalarken, tarihinin çok sesli, en görkemli korosunu, insan mozayiğinin en renklisini, en cilvelisini oluşturuyordu. Hele Rumları, hele Rumları, rengine renk, kokusuna koku, sesine ses katardı.

□□□ *Ama, 55 yılının 6 Eylülü’ne rastlayan bu gece, dünyada benzeri olmayan bu alem, birkaç saat içinde göçüp gidecekti. Sadece birkaç saat bin yılı tüketecekti. Sonra da, uzun yıllara yayılan bir süreçte, gül yüzü, çiçekbozuğu, çöpür, yanaklarında jilet yaraları, bir gözüne kezzap dökülmüş, öbürü bakar kör, burun kemiği çökmüş, yapılı omuzlar düşmüş, İsa’ninkine benzeyen ince, solgun, narin ayakları nasırlı, cerahat kokan, hiçbir pabuca sığmayacak kadar kocaman, parmak araları egzamalı, iltihaplı, tırnakları düşmüş, kuytuda unutulmuş, üstünde mavimtırak sineklerin üşüşüp cümbüş ettiği bir köpek leşi gibi, tarihin ayak uçlarında kalacaktı (p. 210).*

The Turkish ‘side’ is criticized for the departure of the Greeks from Pera/Istanbul in Ahmet

Ümit’s novels too. In

Beyoğlu Rapsodisi

the ‘old’ Pera is praised for the Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Dutch, Jewish, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Russian, English, French, Italian, Hungarian that is heard and then it is lamented that the Greeks are almost completely extinct. According to the hero of the novel, even though at our times there is no more harassment there is no hope for the Greeks to remain.

‘It is as if you cut down the trunk of a tree and then you expect the roots to blossom’

(p. 322). In

Sis Ve Gece

the Greeks of Istanbul are shown to be intimidated and their properties grasped by some Turks (p. 135). In Rıdvan Akar’s

Bir Irkçının İhaneti

the Rums are shown to be forced to speak Turkish (p. 114) and how tragically they were expelled from Turkey (p. 124 etc).

Çayınızı Türkçe mi Alırsınız? of Barış Balcıoğlu is special. The author tries to find the reasons of the interest of the Turks for the Greeks of Istanbul and especially of Beyoğlu:

(Türk orta sınıfından olanlar) bir kent kökeni bulmaları gerekiyordu. Tarih kitaplarını karıştırdılar ve Beyoğlu’nu keşfettiler. Kaçınılmaz olarak da azınlıkları. Avrupa’nın para yardımıyla oldu deseler de, Yunanistan’daki refahın büyüğü gözlerini kamaştırdı ve Rumlara ilgi arttı. Bu biraz da Türkiye’nin batısının yönlendirici olmasından kaynaklandı. Doğuda yaşamış olan Ermenilere nazaran batıdan kovduğumuz Rum vatandaşlarımızı hatırlayıverdik. ‘Asil’ Rumlar düşlerimizi süsler oldu’ (p. 174).

Can Eryümlü in *Kalimerhaba İzmir* explains how İzmir used to be a ‘cosmopolitan’ city with its Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Turks and Europeans but that all was ended with a big fire in 1922 (p. 88). Nostalgia characterizes this novel too. The most nostalgic of all however, are the novels of Sergun Açar and Nazlı Eray. In the first we read a passionate love story of a Greek woman with Hasan Bey. Efrosini leaves Turkey and goes to Thesaloniki when her love dies but her heart stays behind. She loved Istanbul – but still she left! In the second, the heroine meets an old Jew in Beyoğlu and they have some nostalgic days: ‘

Bay Albert

sanki Yahudi mahallesinde tanıdığım ve çocukken arkadaş olduğum bütün bakkalların, kapıcıların ve musluk tamircilerinin bir karışımıydı’

(p.140). Mehmet Culum’s

Alaçatılı

narrates a story where some

Turks and Greeks are shown to have developed a true friendship in Anatolia in spite of the wars and the grandchildren of the Greeks who had left returned many years later to meet old friends of the family.

An Assessment

The novels in which issues of multiculturalism, the Other and the related memories are dealt with are grouped above. Provided this classification is a valid one some conclusions can be drawn in two axes.

a) The perception of the environment, of the relationship between the ethnic, religious groups etc. and the explanations and values that the authors give to this environment and to these relationships constitutes the first axis.

b) The second axis is the identity dimension of the above problematic. Where does the author need to place himself in this world? How does he/she perceive himself in this environment? The major findings will be listed below.

The perception of the (old and present) environment

1- The pre-nationalist movement of Ottomanism does not seem to continue after 1980 and even right after the establishing of the new nation-state (1923). However, an 'imperial' approach, ie., an antinationalist and 'citizenship' identity based on the discourse of 'our compatriots', irrespective of religious and language differences, is met in many novels until today. This tendency can be seen as an inclination toward multiculturalism. This 'acceptance' of the Other is met in novels that can be classified as Ottomanist, Marxist, Humanitarian, Anatolianist etc. The end result is that the Other, in this case the non-Muslims, the Greeks for example, are presented as positive and sometimes with nostalgia.

2- On the other hand nationalist novels present the Other very negative and not-welcomed until today. Also the point of view of the authors who belong to the minorities themselves do not present major changes after 1980: they still complain about their status, politically and socially.

3- A more careful reading reveals that there are differentiations in the first group – Marxists, humanists etc. - and not so much in the second, the 'nationalists'. The nationalists are consistent and more uniform in their 'explanations'. The first group presents a complexity both before 1980 and afterwards, until today. Therefore more attention is given to the approach I called 'Anatolianism'. As mentioned above the 'we are very close to the Other' or the 'we lived happily together in the past' discourse may operate as a means to exalt the Ottoman / Turkish past. But it may have other sources too. Therefore other parameters should be taken into consideration in order to 'understand' the various tendencies.

4- One determining parameter is the 'cause' of the historical happy and unhappy incidents. The nationalist tendency (Anatolianists too) is to silence the 'reasons' of the negative developments and to give credit to 'us' (to the Ottoman legacy for example) by reminding happy and positive developments.

5- Therefore the 'multiculturalism' that is expressed may operate as a means to negate a nationally xenophobic past. The author simply distances himself from these negative and not-politically-correct historical events by silencing the 'cause' on one hand, and on the other by professing 'multiculturalism', a wish for 'living together' etc.

6- Seen from this perspective the discourse of multiculturalism can be differentiated: a) the one that is accompanied with a critical approach to the past and b) the one that is nostalgic without making an effort to 'understand' the past. The second is characterized by lack of empathy too.

7- The presentation of 'different' identities and of a new kind of multiculturalism is seen in the latest novels which present 'forgotten' or rather suppressed identities that they have their basis outside Turkey (Crete, Balkans) and/or within Turkey (Kurdish, Karamanlis etc). Actually these novels are what is especially new in the field of multiculturalism in Turkey.

The Other as a national identity

8- What is surprising in the discourse of nostalgia for the 'gone Other' is that there is a direct connection of the 'gone' with the new arrivals to Istanbul from Anatolia. It is as if the unhappy change is not in the 'going' but in the 'change' due to the new arrivals, too. Connected to this it should be reminded that the lamentation is more due to the harm done to Istanbul (nostalgia of a golden age of a place) than to those that were forced to leave.

9- These phenomena can be interpreted in various ways and probably they do not all originate from the same reasons.

a) One interpretation is that some authors do not feel close – or rather they feel distant – to the people of Anatolia, who are mostly of peasant origin. This can be seen as a class preference and/or bias.

b) Another interpretation can be that they perceive the non-Muslims, as well as themselves more Europeans. This identification is more of a cultural one and the novels in this case operate as a means in professing an identity.

10- This second interpretation is backed up by another connected phenomenon. Many other ethnic groups are 'gone' from Istanbul, too. They have been either assimilated or left. Apart from the Armenians and the Jews who have turned to a minute part of the population of Istanbul, ethnic groups like the Bulgarians, the Catholics (Levantines), the Karamanlis, the Arnavuts (Albanians), the Boshnaks, the Çerkes, the Arabs, and religious groups like the Bektashi, the Mevlevi and so many other religious groups with their differences are not mentioned in this 'multiculturalism' discourse. They are even looked down. The existence of the Kurds in Istanbul for example, and surprisingly, is not perceived as a sign of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism when expressed is highly elitist and paradoxically xenophobic at the same time.

11- Therefore this multiculturalism seems to be looking towards a single direction. Not only is it looking westward but it is inclined to be closer to the Rums, a group that is particularly connected with the Ottoman past. The Rums (often perceived connected to Byzantium) are presented as witnesses who 'prove' the happy past provided by the Ottoman state and society. Hence the connection of the nostalgia with the Anatolianist understanding mentioned above. In other words 'multiculturalism' may operate as a means to profess a western identity and an identification with the national positive past at the same time.

12- Looking at the issue from this point of view one may say that the approach of 'indirect cosmopolitanism' mentioned above is the most genuine 'multiculturalism' movement in the present Turkish novel.

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[1] For details related to the period before 1980 refer to Millas 2000, 2001 and 2005.

[2] For example Şemsettin Sami in *Taaşuk-ı Tal'at ve Fitnat* (1872) praises the honesty of

Christian women of Istanbul contrary to 'our' women and Ahmet Mithat in *Hasan Mellah*

declares that the laws of Europe are needed in order to save a Muslim country (Morocco).

[3] The image of the Greeks in the memoirs is a different issue and the contradiction with respect to the novels is presented in (Millas, 1996).

[4] For a detailed analysis and cases of authors see (Millas, 2005, pp. 425-431).

[5] For the relationship of the opposite sexes and of different ethnic groups narrated in the Turkish (and Greek) literature see (Millas, 1999).