

Language, Aesthetics, and Ideology: Conceptual Frameworks for Turkish Literary Criticism

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate the salient features of Turkish literary criticism through deconstructing the concepts of language, aesthetics and ideology intersecting the disciplines of sociology and history. It questions the *nationality* of the self-evident category of “Turkish literature” exploring in what ways the Turkish Literary Criticism operates in relation to its aesthetics and ideology. While discussions on nationalism invite us to reconsider Turkish Literature vis-a-vis post-colonial framework, the limitations of this framework for the Turkish literary studies are put to contest. Instead of inserting theoretical standpoints to fit into Turkish Literary criticism, this paper elaborates on interrelated concepts to fashion a stratified literary critical framework.

Key Words: language, ideology, literary criticism, nationalism, (post)colonialism

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Dil, Estetik ve İdeoloji: Türkçe Edebiyat Eleştirisi İçin Kavramsal Çerçevesel

Öz

Bu çalışma, dil, estetik ve ideoloji kavramlarını sosyoloji ve tarih çalışmalarının yardımıyla inceleyerek Türkçe Edebiyat eleştirisinin belirgin özelliklerini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlıyor. Türkçe Edebiyat Eleştirisinin estetik ve ideolojik bağlamda nasıl işlediğini araştırarak verili “Türkçe Edebiyat” kategorisinin ulusallığını sorunsallaştırıyor. Uluslaşma tartışmaları bizi post-kolonyal kavramsal çerçeve bağlamında Türkçe Edebiyatı yeniden düşünmeye teşvik ederken, bu çerçevenin Türkçe Edebiyat çalışmaları için sınırları da tartışmaya açılıyor. Teorik görüşleri Türkçe Edebiyat eleştirisine uydurmak yerine, bu incelemede, çok katmanlı edebi-eleştirel bir çerçeve geliştirmek için birbiriyle ilişkili kavramlar üzerine düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dil, ideoloji, edebiyat eleştirisi, ulusalcılık, sömürgecilik (sonrası) kuramı.

Introduction

Critiquing Moretti’s “distant reading” in a seminal article titled “The Object of Comparison,” Jale Parla compellingly argued that globalization has helped free the Ottoman-Turkish Literary scholarship from the Turcologists’ philological monopoly over the study of this body of literature (2004, p.118). Drawing on Ahmet Mithat’s novels, Parla also underlined that the potential for hybridity, which is achieved by what Moretti calls “formal compromise,” that is the mixing of European formal devices with local context and narrative tradition, was undermined in the Turkish literary scholarship up until 1970s since when the Ottoman-Turkish literary production has been revisited as a result of a combination of *hybrid* influences—as I derive from Parla’s suggestion—not necessarily pertaining to one origin (Parla, 2004, p.123-124).

The reason I start with this inference is threefold: I seek in this article to analyze the key features of precisely the post-republican

Turkish literary production, and of the Turkish Literary Criticism which, I think, did not take enough issue with the interrelated concepts of language, aesthetics, and ideology not only in discussing the literary works, but also in interrogating its own critical tools. I, therefore, attempted to put the critics into dialogue among themselves, hoping to provoke and precisely to enrich a discussion on the Turkish literary-critical tradition.

In so doing, I would also like to interpose a question on the limits of the existing theoretical perspectives, precisely involving the post-colonial literary critical framework, which is conducive for comparison and at the same time inadequate to lay out the diverging points of the post-imperial Turkish literary formation. I anticipate the hybridity experimented on the literary level by writers to incite endeavors in utilizing hybrid approaches to literature by literary critics without them necessarily having to resort to appropriate this and that theoretical standpoint as the sole method to analyze the Turkish literary production. Borrowing a post-colonial terminology, decolonizing our literary-critical vocabulary as critics, however, is central to primarily reconstruct a perspective devoid of possible nationalist tendencies, and as such to reevaluate the literary works inside and outside the literary scene through a hybrid strategy, which is both holistic and at the same time particular (and not only necessarily “distant”).

I uphold that the linguistic obsession with Turkish in the majority of Turkish literary works not taken as a sign but as the sacralized style shaping entity confines the language in one geography curtailing its translative feature as Necmi Zeka (2003) ably argues for the poetic works; moreover such logocentric preoccupation accompanying a trenchant ethnocentrism hinders the literary critic from generating formal and contextual arguments pertaining to the aesthetic and political dimension of the text, which would, first of all, require the critic to step outside of what the text’s language singularly points at. Ambiguity and at times incoherency unfolding in the translations of literary and philosophical texts from different languages into Turkish only work to intensify the existing problem, oftentimes manifesting itself in articulations of Turkish, precisely in the poets’ inconsistent use of images or in prose writers’ sacrificing meaning

and clarity for the sake of accomplishing linguistic (not necessarily philosophical) complexity. Teleological approach to Turkish, in fact, deprives both the writer and the critic of mobilizing the language to its fullest potential beyond its philological markers.

Turkish Literature and the Postcolonial Literary Criticism?

Modern Turkish literature has largely been shaped by its resistance against the radicalized reforms of the state, particularly the language reforms culminating in the alphabet change in 1928.

The state's adoption of the Latin alphabet was a politically charged social engineering plan belonging to a grander nationalist modernity project. This national project was violent in nature; it instrumented violence, and stroked violent outcomes. Although what constitutes Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire was never formally colonized, the new state, ironically, situated its historical predecessor as a colonizer, and strived to dissociate itself from the empire's affiliations, which, ironically, resulted in the Republic's rendering itself a self-created post-colony.

Turkish literary production, however, fails to be fully assimilative to the postcolonial literary framework, since, in one respect, this literature is still occupied by the nation state's violent, domesticating reforms. Although the minor aspect of the modern Turkish literature (minority writing in a major language) can be discussed within the scope of the postcolonial framework of literary criticism, theoretical perspectives of this scheme are inadequate to explain the peculiar trajectories of Turkish Literature. Yet, despite the state's ardent efforts to homogenize a multilingual and multiethnic cultures under the rubric of nationalist modernity, Turkish literary works resist this violent occupation and have been generating their peculiar anti-colonial, anti-national narratives, which, at the same time, contest our irrevocable national literary categories as well as the normative post-colonial scholarship.

Compared to the nationalist writers of the post-colony who "reinvented their identities either as a self-willed return to precolo-

nial traditions or as a conscious rejection of an imposed European identity”, nationalist writers of the Republic denied affiliation with the Ottoman multiculturalism at its dawn, and identified with a pre-Islamic origin and with Europe as the carrier of nationalism as well as advanced civilization (Gikandi, 1996, p. 194). Modern Turkish Literature after the early Republic has been a battleground framed by the anxieties, denials, confrontations and contradictions of this contesting nationalized landscape that disrupts its post-colonial literary perspectives as Bhabha (1990), writes,

The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the ‘horizontal’ view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference. (p.300)

It is not the nation per se in the Turkish case, however, which carries this hybridization potential, but the nation despite the nationalizing (homogenizing) force. When Partha Chatterjee calls for a self-generated imagined community and “new forms of the modern state” for the post colony, modern Turkish literary imagination, one might suggest, disposes of fictitious affiliations with reaffirmations of the (colonialist) nationalist state.

The multilingualism of the postcolonial condition is contradicted by the Republican ideology via asserting monolingualism. Distinct from Indian modernity and literature, which, according to Vinay Dharwadker “were formed as writers in the networks linking indigenous multilingual literacy and specific zones of East-West acculturation,” Turkish nationalist modernity has been shaped by the history of violence against its multilingual and multiethnic body of citizens (2003, p.218). That the first massacres of the Armenians in 1789 followed by the Armenian Genocide of 1915 during the Ottoman Empire culminated in the collective violence and deportation of most of the remaining non-Muslim minorities, largely Greeks, in 1955 after the Republic, discloses the continuity / historicity of Turkish nationalism as a means to assimilate the heterogeneous voices. Ethnic and religious homogenization was succeeded by linguistic

purification. The nation-state has internally displaced the writing intellectual along with its ethnic and religious others confining all in a homogenous time and space of an imagined nationalist modernity. Ertürk (2011) has judiciously pointed to the uniquely violent character of the Turkish literary modernity as follows:

Belonging purely neither to the imperial, nor to the anti-colonial histories of nationalist language reform in the World-historical twentieth century, modern Turkish grammatology emerges as a limit narrative about the self-consummating violence of the modern: a violence that can no longer be either obscured, or disinherited. (p.xi)

Such persistent violence against its own citizens construes the radically nationalist and thus self-deprecating character of the nationalist Turkish state. Literary canon in Turkish narrates a scar inflicted by the state violence, a scar, however, which we can no longer read as a deficiency but as a restoring, style shaping character of this narrative.

Formations of Language and Literariness in the Nation

Language summarizes a large portion of one's conceptualization of the world shedding light on one's practices and perspectives in this historical presence. De/selection of words and phrases is at the same time blueprinted by one's interpretation of narratives, which is dialectically inspired by ideological power. Written language(s) had to go through reformation with the promulgation of the print technology in different parts of the world at different times. In some parts of the globe, however, politics played a major role in giving shape to the written language(s) after nationalism. Cyrillicization of the majority of the languages spoken under the Soviet rule is one instance among many nation-state projects. Ottoman-Turkish went through a comparable and yet different process with its codification in many alphabets of the empire in addition to the Perso-Arabic script. Prevalence of the print culture particularly in the 19th century necessitated a simplified alphabet whereby a mass production

and distribution became a priority. What distinguishes the language reforms during and after the transition from empire to republic is the mobilization of their potential ideological power to generate a national nation (*ulus*) from an imperial nation (*millet*) via ethno-linguistic nationalism.

Although the late Ottoman linguistic reforms, but above all, the republican language reform was to an extent a “catastrophic success” as Geoffrey Lewis puts it in its political and cultural contexts, literature and its writer against the state have, perhaps contradictorily and inconsistently, distanced themselves from such linguistic eugenics. The immediate target of such control was, at first, press, which was used as a nationalist propaganda tool but which also, included the first novel form printed as serial novels (*tefrika roman*) in newspapers, and hence the current studies affirm that the first literary writers were both compliant and incongruous with the state during the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. There has been a strong literary magazine tradition in Turkey, which has tremendously shaped Turkish literary modernity since the 19th century, and the literary circle in Turkey has originated and developed around this prolific periodicals publishing market, the significance of which has also been overlooked although even the first Ottoman novels were published as serials in newspapers and literary magazines. This conjunctive ambivalence implies the Republican state policy of erasing the pre 1928 memory.¹

Empirical consequence of such an endeavor was its detriment to the alphabets other than the Latinized Turkish, and to the spoken languages other than the *native/folk* Turkish. Hobsbawm (1990) explains the mechanism of “nation as progress” as follows, “The small people, language or culture fitted into progress only insofar as it accepted subordinate status to some larger unit or retired from battle to become a repository of nostalgia and other sentiments – in short, accepted the status of old family furniture” (p.41). The new na-

¹ A recent project on “History of Serial Novels in Turkish Literature (1831-1928)”, however, which has been initiated by Özyeğin University in Istanbul, has been made available on a database since January 1, 2017. The project workshop open to the public was held in the same university on April 7, 2017.

tion-state of Turkey exploited literary language as power to control a heterogeneous society reproducing ur-narratives about the origins of *the* nation. Literary power of language aided the nation-state in its controversially rewriting historical narratives and (re)presenting them as history per se. Literary production also served to promulgate the nationalist agenda infusing the public with the idea of one nation (Turk), one language (Turkish), and one religion (Sunni-Islam). Still, there has not been an *outside* language encroaching on and competing with a native language (Turkish). On the contrary, the major language has left no place of existence for minority languages, rendering Turkish the sole language of publication.² There exists no Turkish-English Literature as does the “Indian branch” of English Literature as Salman Rushdie (1992) conveys; therefore, no such “hybridity” is formed in the auspicious *homeland* (p.65).

“...but it is not Turkish Literature..!”

A conventional response from an unspecialized reader to a Turkish literary text evaluated as *unconventional* without implicating a negative/positive assessment. Yet, what is Turkish Literature, really? And what we talk about when we talk about Turkish Literature versus literature in Turkish? These two phrases, indeed, have separate semantic, aesthetic and ideological connotations when uttered in Turkish—the first referring to the national formation and the second to literature produced in Turkish. A significant cluster of literary criticism in Turkish adopts Turkish Literature (“*Türk Edebiyatı*”, “literature of the Turk”) as opposed to Literature in Turkish (“*Türkçe Edebiyat*”, “literature in Turkish”) elevating the national in the literary category not readily discernable in English (*Türk*: Turk; *Türkçe*: Turkish language).³ Far from being a mere lexical inquiry, this linguistic/literary nationalism informs the backdrop of Turkish Literary Studies.

The nation-state has been self-conscious about its Orientalism, which Aamir Mufti (2016) holds to be a feature of nationalism: “Ori-

² Regardless of the publications in Kurdish, which have only recently proliferated.

³ Literature of Turkey (“*Türkiye Edebiyatı*”) is among the suggestions as an alternative to *Türkçe Edebiyat*, however, it poses another difficulty with emphasizing the national geography, and risks obviating the imperial literary works.

entalist theories of cultural difference are grounded in *a notion of indigeneity as the condition of culture*—a chronotope, properly speaking, of deep habitation in time—and that therefore *nationalism is fundamentally an Orientalist cultural impulse*” (p.37 emphasis original). The contemporary writers in Turkish, as a response, exploit the interconnectedness between nationalistic and orientalist tendencies in their texts in order to both lay bare the features of the political history of Turkey, and to form their textual aesthetics. Pamuk’s *Snow* (2002), for instance, mobilizes the nationalistic and orientalist discourses to parody the art of the state as if to recontextualize “all that is solid melts into air” of the *Communist Manifesto*. The novel instrumentalizes a text in the national canon such as Namık Kemal’s (1872) *Vatan Yahut Silistre* (“*Homeland or Silistra*”), and parodies the performativity of the play restaged as *Vatan Yahut Türban* (“*Homeland or Headscarf*”) to reinstate the frivolous aspects of the Kemalist reforms in a city drifted into a chaos by the alleged “Islamic fundamentalists”. The play ends with a real coup, which renders people dead *at the stage*. The novel, hence, reinscribes the new republic a deadly performance in its staging “the internal political theater of performance ‘under Western eyes’” (Ertürk, 2010, p.642).

In *Rabelais and His World* Bakhtin (1984) develops a theory of the “carnavalesque” to understand the development of the European Literature and mentions the medieval carnival time as an “escape from the usual official way of life” (p.8). Literature, especially the (European) novelistic text as Bakhtin would say, reopens this carnival time disregarding the official discourses. The time of the novel, then, becomes the time of the carnival where the language norms are violated, and assimilated into this free zone. Bakhtin demonstrates a model in “Carnival and Carnavalesque” situated precisely at a specific period and location (medieval Europe), and although this particular conceptualization may work useful to evaluate modern Turkish literary works, I would be cautious as Bakhtin does in the seminal article “Discourse in the Novel” paying keen attention to language as an already charged world making conception itself:

As a result of the work done by all these stratifying forces in language, there are no “neutral” words and forms—words and forms that

can belong to “no one”; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete *heteroglot conception of the world*. . . *Each word tastes of the context* and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. (emphasis mine, p.293).

Having argued for the organic heterogeneity of language and its situatedness, Bakhtin of “Discourse” will make more sense than that of “Carnival” in critiquing the style of the literary text in other contexts, which is itself formed by the “internal dialogism of the word” (p.279). *Snow* as a novel, I would say, forms a concept of snow through exploiting the dialogic potential of the word dispersed in its thematic and formal workings regardless of the actual dialogues between its characters.⁴

We can, thus, claim that *Snow* is an anti-allegory contrary to the Jameson’s suggested third world literary model. It is not the third world writer that carries the potential to allegorize as the contemporary literary works evince, conversely, the literary writer resists against the nation-state’s allegorizing tendency to homogenize a heterogeneous society. Sibel Irzik (2003) complicates Jameson’s argument exemplifying from iconic post 1950 novels, including *The Disconnected*, where expectation to allegorize is downgraded in a parodic mode, and highlights that the urge to allegorize and at the same time to resist against it “originates not in some situational, materialist consciousness of community, but in the official ideology itself, in its need to mobilize individual lives in the process of imagining the nation in its own terms” (p.559).

⁴ “Discourse”, thus, will render a more fruitful discussion in Turkish literary criticism if Bakhtin’s theorization of language in the novel (versus in poetry for instance) is given due attention. Poetic language, for Bakhtin, has already forgotten about its context, and so the poet cannot speak beyond the context of which she has *now* generated (p. 297). Poetic style is agreeably a working of one person’s reification; however, the poetry of Edip Cansever (1928-1986), and particularly the poetry collection *Oteller Kenti* (1985) (“*The City of Hotels*”), among other poetic works, for instance, operates on a level to negate Bakhtin’s bifurcation between the discourses in these genres. One can indeed read *Oteller Kenti* as a prosaic text with its stratification of discourse and orchestrations of consciousness in its poetic personas. Cansever, then, novelizes *Oteller Kenti* elevating the (prose) poems to speak “through language not in a given language” (Bakhtin, 2002, p.299).

Referring to the nature of art, which resists against nation-state's homogenizing force, and thus putting into question the concept's foundation, Venkat Mani notes that Pamuk's *The New Life* "does not ask to be inserted in the list of nations as metaphors that Bhabha creates in his essay. On the contrary, it disentitles the nation of its metaphor" (p.181-2). If *The New Life* like other modern literary works "disentitles the nation of its metaphor," then, the question Gikandi (1996) posed referring to Rushdie's writing, whether we repeat the "nationalist myth of return" even renouncing it, does not reverberate in the Turkish context as this body of literature already lacks an outside to return except a self-generated one (p.200). Trauma of the territorial loss, in the Turkish national history, could only be recovered through a persistent nationalization and reimagining a self-constituted by an "original" inside to preserve and a "Western" outside to progress as Meltem Ahıska writes, "By constantly pointing to what is lost, but also by denying coming to terms with it, and instead projecting it as a 'lack' for which others are to be blamed, occidentalism becomes a trope of both memory and violence" (p.141).

In the introduction of *New Perspectives on Turkey: "Literature and the Nation: Confronting the Unhealed Wounds"*, the editors, accordingly, highlight some of the characteristics of the early Republican Turkish Literature one of which is identified as the gendered representation question of the nation: "While the Anatolian land that was to make up the fabric of the nation is represented as female in its simultaneous desirability and elusiveness, the national protagonist is male...whose quest to live up to the example of the father (of the nation) was repeatedly frustrated, a subject whose pathos was latent in the early republican novels..." (Köroğlu et al., 2007, p.8). This interpretation reads a continuity in the gendered nationalization of the land in the literary works stretching from the early 20th century onwards all the same stressing in other parts of the introduction that there has been a shift in these narratives towards challenging the nationalist representation of the land after 1970s (p.7).

The question of what entitles "Turkish Literature" as a national formation with its inclusions, omissions, and contradictions, perhaps, has not been a common inquiry in the Turkish literary scho-

larship except the latest intrusions by a cluster of scholars who claim that “national” inclinations do not necessarily harbor in the literary works (referring particularly to the literature of the World War 1 period) themselves but in the scholars’ “nationalist” approach to these works once considered the castles of the Turkish *national* literature. “Denationalized” rereading of the literary works belonging to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, on the other hand, unveiled a critical set of narratives which according to Adak and Altınay (2010) result first of all from a “radical shift in scholarship... “enabling them [the critics] to notice and engage with moments of resistance (to official history) and history writing from different perspectives (such as not taking the Turkish protagonist or the allegory of the Turkish nation as the norm)” (p.25-26).

Another reason for this change in the literary scholarship suggested by Adak and Altınay is allegedly a transformation in history writing which has welcomed the testimonies and autobiographies as “monuments” in themselves “not subservient to an outside, external, objective history imposed as ‘official truth’” (p.26). Analyzed through this lens, these scholars argue that “Turkish memoirs and fiction do not singlehandedly serve the interests of the national imaginary. Even those that have been show-cased as perfect examples of ‘national literature’ (for instance, Halide Edib’s *Ateşten Gömlek*) harbor contradictions and inconsistencies that unsettle the ‘republican defensive narrative’ of 1915” (p.26).

Although limited in the temporal scope i.e. considering a period of wars and catastrophes particularly, according to this argument, there exists more of a problem of reading by the scholars than writing by the authors per se. This methodological insight also pinpoints the lexical nationalism mentioned in the beginning prevalent in (still) using *literature of the Turk* (Türk Edebiyatı) instead of *literature in Turkish* (Türkçe Edebiyat) or even *literature of Turkey* (Türkiye Edebiyatı). This has been a recent debate in Turkish literary circles, which indicates the latent nationalist tendency by (a majority of) literary scholars in intentionally indiscriminating overt concepts like Turk and *Turkish language* insisting that “Turk” in “literature of the Turk” has been naturalized to include *all* in Turkey despite their

ethnic differences, thus promoting and perpetuating the nationalist argument on the literary stage.⁵

Another strand in the discussion of Turkish Literature as a national formation unfolds, on the other hand, in writers', specifically, poets' excessive linguistic obsession with Turkish in a way to obstruct them from participating in comparative literary exchanges with other languages as the literary critic and poet Necmi Zeka observed (p.533). *Snow* also disconcertedly thematizes this language issue in the narrator's commentary on a poet named Fahir, whose "poems influenced by his poetry translations into an artificial pure Turkish were dearth of inspiration, poor and incomprehensible" (p.56). Fahir, what may seem paradoxical, is also an ardent supporter of Western poetry, who studied at Saint Joseph, and not surprisingly, also went to Paris just as the later Ottoman and early Republican intellectuals were meant to do. What is interesting in this account is the fact that poetry translations into Turkish from "Western" languages did not necessarily enrich Turkish; conversely, translation mechanism as is construed by the "purists" deprived the language of its organically historical richness. Translations of world classics into Turkish, however, which were conducted in the early republican period, sought to enrich the Turkish language as argued by Hasan Ali Yücel, the pioneer of the translation project and the founder of the Translation Bureau (1939). The World Classics series bearing Yücel's name is the first and still the most comprehensive world classic series in Turkish published by Turkey's first national bank *İş Bankası* (1924). The series hallmarks the republican humanist idealism as highlighted on the cover of each translated work: "The first phase of insight and perception of humanist spirit begins with adoption of art works that are most tangible expression of human existence. Among the branches of art, literature owns this expression with richest intelligence elements", and Yücel continues to state that reading these works in Turkish is essential for their civilizational project (2007, epilogue). One can notice at first the ambivalent endeavor of purifying Tur-

⁵ See <http://t24.com.tr/k24/yazi/konusmalar-dilici-ceviri1,1152> for the most recent debate on this topic.

kish of Arabic and Persian loanwords while at the same time translating the European and to a lesser extent Asian classics into Turkish *for civilization's sake*. We can read the divergence of this nationalist translation project from that of Auerbach who was a contemporary of Yücel and contributor to the nationalist humanist project during his exile in Istanbul.⁶ Emphasis on reading the classics in Turkish only chimes in with the assimilative objective of the language reforms, which systematically controlled the unofficial language use. Turkish humanism, then, was an attempt to appropriate humanism for the nationalist project, which corresponds to the republic's asserting a right over the ancient Anatolian cultures.

If we read Turkish linguistic reforms in the light of such Turkish "humanistic" nationalism, then its applause by the majority including the literary circles render at least comprehensible. Yet, such a grand linguistic project should anticipate a literary loss. The linguistic pride, Zeka reminds us, resulting from a false belief in nationalistic superiority endorsed over a century invokes an obstacle in front of literary innovation in Turkish, and purports in "A Prisoner of Language" that modern Turkish poets unjustifiably believe that the peculiarity of their language "prevents their poetry from being translated and read extensively. However, taking refuge in an idealized language not only gives rise to unjustified grandiosity, but also often leads Turkish poets to work with a limited number of obsolete ideas and worn-out sentimentalities" (p.533). Although the overgeneralizing tone of the observation needs caution, Zeka's attention is important taking into account the relatively long tradition of poetry writing and the extant popularity of the genre producing large number of poets (not necessarily poetry readers) in Turkish every year.

In "Exiles at Home: Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies", Hülya Adak rightly questioned the success of the alphabet and language reforms of the Kemalist Republic investigating the early Republican writer's ideology vis-à-vis their work. Referring

⁶ See Erich Auerbach (2013). "Philology and Weltliteratur" in *World Literature: A Reader*. Ed. Theo D'haen et al. New York: Routledge, 65-73. Also Kader Konuk (2010). "Turkish Humanism", "Writing Mimesis in Istanbul" in *East-West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey*. Stanford: Stanford UP.

to the Republican poet Nazım Hikmet and writer Falih Rıfkı Atay, Adak writes: “On the one hand, they vouched for the language reform through their collaboration with the Türk Dil Kurumu (Lewis 70), on the other, they did not abide by the dictates of the reform in their literary and nonfictional work” (2008, p.23). In relation to Adak’s reflection, Nergis Ertürk (2011) argued in her meticulously written book *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* that despite the ideological differences between Nazım Hikmet and other “conservative” writers of the Republican era, Hikmet also acknowledged and mobilized “the internal heterogeneity of the Turkish language” (p.161). One can then attentively respond to Adak’s relevant inquiry when she put forward: “If an earlier generation of writers resisted the language reform, then further questions await literary scholarship: Did literature keep an autonomous distance from the [language] reform, and was the reform unsuccessful in this respect?” (Ertürk, 2008, p.24). Ertürk affirmed this question elucidating the ways in which the late Ottoman and early Republican canonical, yet scarcely translated, literary works inhabit the unruliness of language: “Despite and against the extremity of measures for nationalization, such self-reflexive literary *stagings* demonstrate that no control of linguistic communication is ever complete” (Ertürk, 2011, p.17). I would also be wary of a too optimistic reading of literature as power to rebuke state’s control over language keeping in mind Zeka’s attentiveness to the poetic and prosaic works, which (still) follow in the nationalist ideologue’s wake in their linguistic confinement.

Ethnocentrism has penetrated the artistic and political spheres in Turkey via a systematic use/circulation of language as the bearer of nationalist ideology. Turkish literary studies has also collaborated with the ideologues of the new Turkish Republic in a way to engineer a homogeneous language stripped of its mobility/liquidity which stands in stark contrast to the normative and at times naive concept of language as an organically evolving entity, and literature as a pure aesthetic production. Aesthetics of the literary artists during the late Ottoman and early Republic were informed by their respective ideologies, which might have differed in some aspects, but unified in nationalism as the sole encompassing ideological stance.

That Nâzım Hikmet approved and supported the language reforms but as Adak and Ertürk convey did not submit to its rules in his literary work epitomizes the ambivalent position of the Republican writer. According to Ertürk (2011), Hikmet brings out the dissidence against the official linguistic regulation most radically in *Epic of Sheik Bedreddin* which marks “Nazım’s literary communism” using “foreignizing translation ascribing it to an anonymous collective” (p.173). Hikmet’s ambivalent position, I would like to further suggest, also emerges from a similar modality that Simon Gikandi (2012) calls “romantic strategy” through which the African writers employed prose to depict the reality to actualize reform and poetry to glorify the nation after the colonization (p.319). The ways in which “romantic strategy” played a role in the early post-colonial African writing resemble the trajectory of the lyric romanticism in the early Republican Turkish writing. Hikmet’s ambivalence results from his poetry’s heroic undertaking the modalities of prose and poetry of the post-colonial African experience, simultaneously.

Contemporary literary production imagines a collective on an economic level as well as non-identitarian taking Hikmet’s communist gesture and transcending it. Since no matter how “non-identitarian” his poetry unfolds as the linguistic opening up of the Turkish language to the other languages as Nergis Ertürk suggests, Hikmet’s poetry bluntly refrains from touching minority issues either in nationalist authoritarian Turkey or in communist authoritarian Soviet Union. Later writers, who no longer needed to glorify the nation, have surpassed this early republican anxiety, and they used their literary material to subvert the literary domestication of the language reform. As early as in the 50s, one can trace a consistent counterrevolution in language use, theme, and form, indicating that Turkish literary language has kept a distance to and is partially “freed from its republican fetters” not only after 1980, the date of the most violent coup d’etat, but it consistently resisted against the official language soon after the reforms were imposed (Adak 2008; Parla 2008).

Against the rule of monolingualism of the early nation-states as in the Turkish case, Rebecca Walkowitz’s (2015) suggestion to turn our attention away from the 19th century novels when national languages normalized the perception that literature had a (national) language, to

the contemporary novel which is already born multilingual (p.29-30). Orhan Pamuk's (2006) *The Black Book*, for instance, exploits the orientalized Sufi practices to criticize the alphabet reform as the narrator articulates Galip's experience with *Hurufism*—the Sufi sect believing in God's manifestation in the Arabic alphabet—as follows: “he could easily make out the *alifs* and *lams* that made up the first four letters of the word Allah, but stranger still...the tears falling from their eyes resemble the Os, Us, and Cs in the Latin alphabet. This was the first time Galip had come across a Hurufi response to the 1928 Alphabet Revolution” (p.300). In addition Erdağ Göknaç's commentary that Pamuk uses Sufi tradition, an unorthodox sect of Islam, to politicize the alphabet reform by the secular state, here, Pamuk peculiarly pinpoints the similar sacralization of the Latin alphabet by the state, which, contradictorily, aimed to secularize the Turkish language eliminating the sacred (non-arbitrary) Arabic orthography (p.227). In contemporary Turkish writing, the fear from writing with its non-arbitrary signs has compellingly been replaced by the fear of writing in an unescapably sacralized language regardless of its non-arbitrary signs.

Modes of Writing and Resistance in a Multilingual Nation and Outside

There has been an emerging body of criticism on minor literature, literary resistance, literature and trauma, coup d'état novels, literature and memory, and on violence in contemporary Turkish literary studies, which can channel through revisiting the role of the nation-state in relation to the literary writer, and thus to the literary text. Although the extant literary scholarship guides us to understand the corporeal and epistemic violence that the individual literary works evince, no substantial research has been done to interrogate the dialectical relationship between the writer and the nation-state, out of which such violence (ergo the text), first of all, emerges. In *The Making of the State Writer*, Evgeny Dobrenko (2003) writes, “*The transformation of the author into his own censor—herein is the true history of Soviet literature... Soviet culture overcame the eternal abyss between art and life, or, in the terms of traditional culture—from*

Pushkin to Blok—between ‘poet and mob,’ between ‘poetry and utility’” (p.xviii). One can claim a similar trajectory as far as Turkish literature is concerned, and this censorship follows various paths lending itself further to literary transgressions.

If even some of the Ottoman and early Republican writers employed literary tools to circumvent the state ideology, criticism on more contemporary works alerts us about a more radical confrontation with it. Stripped of their illusion to achieve the nationalist unity, modern and contemporary writers as the current scholarship evinces have invented novel strategies to counter the stultifying interdictions on literary language that is internally heterogeneous (Bakhtin). One such writer Murat Uyurkulak (2006) sets *Har: Bir Kıyamet Romanı* (“*Glow: A Doomsday Novel*”) in two levels: the first level takes place in a land called *Netamiye*, a non-existing word in Turkish yet sounding similar to the adjective *netâmeli* meaning foreboding (from the Arabic *netānet*: to stink).⁷ Different groups of people live in *Netamiye* some of whose names derived from the minority languages spoken in Turkey: One group of people are called *Topikler*, an Armenian dish name, another *Xırbolar*, meaning uncouth people in Kurdish and written in the Kurdish alphabet as the letter “x” does not exist in Turkish, but the plural ending “-lar” belongs to Turkish grammatically. Conjugating Armenian and Kurdish words with Turkish endings has been commonly practiced particularly among the minorities, and here the author plays with this oral pattern on the literary level uncovering the already conflated language use. When *Har* was published in 2006, the ban on using the letters x, q, w, î, ê, û in the Kurdish alphabet was not yet released. It was only a few years ago that the Kurdish letters were liberated after almost a ninety year prohibition by the state.⁸ These letters were perpetually recorded as illegible to-

⁷ The adjective *netâmeli* is less commonly used today and it is rare for people with no specialization in the Ottoman-Turkish to recognize the similarity. Uyurkulak, therefore, politicizes the literary language inserting a criticism on the language reforms.

⁸ The rules regarding the use of these letters are still arbitrarily practiced, and particularly on the identity cards, the question remains unresolved. After the 2015 elections, since the Peace Process came to a halt, one can see a divergence from these policies to (again) restrictive ones in line with a growingly more authoritarian regime. Tolerance for the Kurdish language, since then, has diminished, and the government has retreated from the positive steps it took in the beginning and middle periods of its rule.

gether with the speeches conducted in Kurdish by the Kurdish MPs in the parliament. *Har*, hence, communicates in a semi illegible language not only due to its use of letters and words from *unrecognized* languages, but also to its language operating on a metaphorical level. Uyrkulak pens a novel unreadable for the nation-state since what is signified even by the familiar signs are peculiarly illegible.

Har consists of sixteen sections (bāb), and counting backwards from sixteen to zero, each section begins with an elegy generated by the author. The third section to the last is written as a dramatic monologue in numbered verses with alliterations, and through harnessing a satiric mode denotes aphorism like poems as if summarizing the human condition. Yet, a closer look at one of these lines will disclose that even these supposedly pity statements do not allow a universal understanding. Words constantly fail us without granting a common meaning. The verse number 23 reads: “See the black crowd inside you / The doomsday of the boiling crowd / One who starts up with anger doesn’t always sit down with a loss / It’s a country now, occupying her seat as the plural and murderer” (p.228).⁹ In the last line, Uyrkulak mobilizes the ambiguity rising from the gender neutral third person pronoun and from the option to omit the adverb “as” in Turkish, resulting in an anonymous possessor and subject. This line may as well read: “It’s a country now; the plural and murderer occupy her seat,” whereby, completely changing the agency in the sentence. The author gives us a clue here as to how people interpret utterance: in the first version, it is the country herself who is also the plural and murderer sitting on her seat whereas in the second version, it is still a country but here some unidentified others who happen to be both the plural and murderer sit on her seat, i.e. confiscate her seat. The first version tells us that this country is the doer, it is a murderer and also plural, that is, representing its people; the second, conversely, hands in the agency to an outside: this (our) country is occupied by (those) murderers. Therefore, two people sounding to speak the same language may interpret its signs

⁹ “İçindeki kara kalabalığı gör. /Kalabalığın kaynaştığı mahşer gününü. /Öfkeyle kalkan zararlar oturmaz daima. /Bir ülkedir o, çoğul ve katil oturur koltuğunda.”

altogether differently. Uyurkulak puts this semantic ambiguity to the core of *Glow*, implying the futility of the belief that people in the land of *Netamiye* speak a homogenous language intelligible to every one of her members to the same degree. The writer suggests, when either *Netamlar* and *Xırbolar* utter this line, they will interpret it differently also among themselves depending on their particular perspectives. If we regard this country in the lines *Netamiye*, for instance, the first version holds this country accountable for murdering its own people while the second version allegedly blames *Xırbolar* for invading *Netamiye*. *Har* underlines the impossibility of communication at the end of the day regardless of the linguistic ability. Not only human beings and angels but human beings using the same language among themselves interpret the signs differently; hence, the suggestion is that linguistic competence fails to achieve mutual comprehensibility, ultimately invoking semantic violence.

Almost a century after the reform, Turkish literary language proves that ambiguity is inherent in the Turkish language written in the (un)sacralized Latin alphabet. The confusion arising from how to differentiate the verb to be (*olmak*) from to die (*ölmek*) in the Ottoman Turkish alphabet, where both words are written alike with context determining the meaning, takes on a complicated layer.¹⁰ *Har* insists that this language with its legible signs carries the potential to render itself *illegible*. The nation-state with its attempt to control meaning fails to do so in its negotiation with the writer, who ceaselessly elicits the inherent ambiguity in a homogenized language as well as its violence as a confined one.

Meltem Gürle (2007) reads in *Har* an “anarchist utopia set against the official and totalizing sternness of authority. Unlike the modernist utopias, his utopia refuses to envisage a movement towards a better future, but is marked with the ominous voice of doomsday, inviting destruction as well as salvation” (p.143). Needless to say, *Har* also harbors both fantastic and science fictive elements, and I would add that Uyurkulak does not fall for the transitory festive unofficiality of language during the carnival time (literary text), and rather emphasizes the dearth of a common language, a common interpre-

¹⁰ For an in depth discussion, see Ertürk’s first chapter in *Grammatology*.

tation through exploring semantic gaps in Turkish, which, I suggest, is more central to his text, implying that the way one mobilizes language in her own interest to generate meaning be it the authoritarian state or a lay person is a proof of language as a manipulative tool, and that the people as the fool who might be freed to use their unofficial language at a given moment, are all the more unaware that this so called unofficial language has already been officialized. There is no original, pure unofficial language; every utterance is under control, manipulating this controlled language's own tools against itself, which needs to be deciphered in a literary text.

In *Writing Outside the Nation* Azade Seyhan (2001) argues for exile's positive consequence as bestowing "a condition of critical reflection" upon its writers who "find the narrative and cultural coordinates to offer another version of their land's history, a version free of official doctrine and rhetoric, a history of the actual human cost of transformation and migration" (p.20). Yet, exile can take place inside one's own land, further problematizing how to own a land, a language, and what it means to *disown* one "free of official doctrine" within. Writing outside the nation as Seyhan predicts, thus, does not necessarily lend itself to "critical reflection"; on the contrary, distance may further romanticize the idea of the nation as Anderson mobilizes as "imaginary homelands". Travel and migration into another nation may well help solidify the nostalgia of the bygone territory, and rather than keeping a critical distance, one can easily resort to reproducing the national myth in line with the official doctrine. In addition, migration can also take place within the nation, which does not curtail narratives telling the unofficial story. Moreover, as Rebecca Walkowitz suggests regarding the novels "born translated", "the focus on travel [in world literature studies], while tracing uptake and renovation and therefore also new emergence, has also tended to emphasize the distinction between literature's beginnings and its afterlives. Translation appears as part of literature's second act" (p.29). One can, thus, write inside the nation as if they are outside and vice versa.

Expanding on the theory of minor literature upheld by Deleuze and Guattari drawing from Kafka, in *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, Yasemin Yıldız (2012) stresses the underlying multilingual structure in a seemingly monolingual text like Kafka's:

writing *on* yiddish but *in* german in these varied genres, kafka addresses the problem of having a mother tongue that is socially unsanctioned within a larger structure increasingly governed by the monolingual paradigm. in the process, he rearticulates the mother tongue itself as inescapably uncanny (*unheimlich*) rather than familiar, as the paradigm would have it. (p.35).

Problematizing the holy mother tongue, hence the nation built on it, Yıldız questions the internal dynamics of writing too easily decoupled as practicing in and outside the nation. Intellectual imprisonment has been so violent that even the migrant writer cannot escape it. Again, Yıldız observes referring to a familiar text for the Turkish-German readers of the Turkish-Kurdish-German author Sevgi Özdamar writing in German: “Her acts of literal translation are not set against German as an imposed language, but *against violence in the “mother tongue” itself*. That mother tongue, in turn, is a result of monolingualizing strategies of the nation state” (p.149 emphasis mine). Yıldız’s shrewd observation is important especially for the contemporary Turkish literary context where I share her line of reasoning attesting to the inherent violence in Turkish as in Özdamar’s so called mother tongue.

Despite writing in German, can we then consider Özdamar’s literary oeuvre a component of Turkish Literature in the way we can see *Auf der anderen Seite* (“*The Edge of Heaven*”) by Fatih Akın (2007) within the history of Turkish Cinema? There is certainly more at work in Özdamar’s writing than its narrativization in German. When Özdamar mobilizes literal translation, it performs to lay bare the violence in Turkish, whose affect transfers into German. As a minority writing in a major language, does Özdamar’s writing necessarily invoke the minor literary category theorized by Deleuze and Guattari? I am, nevertheless, more inclined to favor a lesser essentialized (and conservative) conceptualization of “becoming minor,” which JanMohamed and Lloyd put, “is not a question of essence (as the stereotypes of minorities in dominant ideology would want us to believe) but a question of position: a subject-position that in the final analysis can be defined only in ‘political’ terms” (p.9). This subject-position, I think, might help more accurately define the writings not only by mi-

norities but also by some segments of the majority positioning themselves with the minorities (not only ethnic and linguistic).

The poet Ece Ayhan (1931-2002), for instance, is idiosyncratic in the Turkish Literary history as a result of writing *as if* a minority. Ayhan's poetry not only thematizes minority histories, but also alienates the official Turkish language as if it is a foreign language whereby framing its aesthetics. Ayhan's literary oeuvre from *Kınar Hanım'ın Denizleri* (1959) ("Ms. Kınar's Seas") to *Yort Savul* (1977) (literally "Get out of the Way") demonstrates a minor subjectification with his extremely unconventional handling of Turkish bolstered by Ayhan's own recoding of the language rendering it illegible not for the implied reader, who is not proficient in *the* language, but precisely in its socio-historically charged codes. Ms. Kınar Hanım (1876-1950) who gave the poetry book her name was an Armenian theater actor, whom the poet commemorates nostalgically in the poem *Ms. Kınar's Seas*. Ayhan persistently kept an account of the subaltern at a time when an exclusionary nationalism was at its zenith, thereby penning the "civil" history of a bygone diverse plurality.¹¹ In a poem titled "Gökyüzünde Bir Cenaze Töreni" ("A Funeral in the Sky") in the poetry collection *Yort Savul*, Ayhan (1977) rewrites the lyrics of a children's game¹² originally reading as, "I sell butter / I sell honey / I myself sell as my master is apparently dead..." to revivify a violent scene in the italicized (original) lines as follows: "...Next thing I know an unburiable funeral in the sky / And below, in front of a bundle of balloons watered / A tom thumb with bullet feet is broken but won't cry / *My dad who masterfully detains death got killed, I sell / Freed birds on a broken off old woman's lap / My son got killed I sell on Üsküdar pier area*" (p.34).¹³ Ayhan transfers the dramatic state of

¹¹ 1955 Istanbul pogrom, which Ayhan might have witnessed, homogenized (Turkified) the remaining marks of a heterogeneous empire.

¹² Equivalent of "Duck, duck, goose" in North America

¹³ My literal translation. Turkish original reads as, "Düşmemiş Hezarfen Efendi'yle karşılaşır mı acaba? / Bir bakmışım baloncusu uçmuş kan mavisi balonlar / Kuşların vurulduğu mevsim Üsküdar iskele alanında / Bir bakmışım gökyüzünde gömülmez bir cenaze töreni / Ve aşağıda, yıkanmış balonlar demetinin başında / Kurşun ayaklı bir parmak çocuk, kırılır ağlamaz / *Ölümü ustaca oyalayan babam öldürülmüş ben satarım / Kopmuş bir kocakarının da eteklerinde azat kuşları / Oğlum öldürülmüş ben satarım Üsküdar iskele alanında*"

being dead in the children's game, to being killed in the poem, which is voiced by two personas: a child and an old woman. Where Özdamar literally translates Turkish sayings into German whereby exhibiting the violence imminent in the source language, Ayhan internally translates the lyrics into a poem similarly construing the violence in Turkish.

In a book of collected essays on the language of the loser, Gürbilek (2007) asked as if prematurely echoing what Umberto Eco expressed in a 2015 Guardian interview¹⁴ on literature about losers as *real* literature: "Now that she has lost the battle called history, imprisoned in pre-history; now that she has been defeated, deprived, silenced; then, from where is the subaltern getting her linguistic grandeur? Can the subaltern's language really be monumental, sublime, and magnificent?" (p.85). Handing in the agency to the subaltern, Gürbilek points at a literature of the loser empowering a language doomed to be defeated: language of the loser/writer (ethnic and religious minority; oppressed; female) against the language of the winner/state (ethnic and religious majority; oppressor; male). Such a dialectic needs revisiting of the body of literature produced by the oppressed.

Modern Turkey's history is written by the history of its coup d'états narrated by literary production in/directly. Since memory studies have taken an uphold in Turkey recently, in part due to the literary scholars aligning outside the national literary canon, there is a growing interest also in the testimony literature written by the imprisoned and tortured as well as by the ones who witnessed this historical moment relatively from the outside. According to the scholars of testimony literature, this body of prison literature has been a way out of this collective violence ensuring confrontation and hence resistance: "literature evolving around coup d'états have replaced truth commissions in Turkey where confrontation with coup d'états have not been experienced and where truth commissions haven't been founded as in Latin America (Çalışkan and Günay-Erkol, 2016, p.27-28). Has

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/nov/12/umberto-eco-real-literature-is-about-losers>

Turkish literary stage, finally, welcomed confrontation with a violent past, which itself once contributed, and has thus catered to literary resistance?

Yes and no. Let us first look at the narratives of the state. Comparing two autobiographical narrations, *Nutuk* (the speech) by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk delivered in 1927 narrating his “prophetic” role in the independence struggle, with the pioneering woman novelist and political figure Halide Edib Adıvar’s (1884-1964) *The Turkish Ordeal* written in 1928 in English narrating her role in the national movement, Hülya Adak suggests that a “potential resistance” by Halide Edib against the self “myth” of Mustafa Kemal has been overlooked due to the intentional omissions and modifications in the translation of her work into Turkish as *The Turk’s Ordeal with Fire* which was undertaken only in 1962: “Rather than challenging the Kemalist national myth as expounded in *Nutuk* through strategies employed in *The Turkish Ordeal*, such as the historical and intersubjective exploration of the self and other, *The Turk’s Ordeal with Fire* paradoxically endorses the Kemalist national myth” (Adak, 2003, p.524). Atatürk’s prophetic role, however, was not only asserted by himself in *Nutuk*. If one looks at the writings on culture by the Republican education minister Hasan Ali Yücel, where he cites a paragraph from *Nutuk* followed by a commentary in which he addresses Atatürk in the third person capital letter “O”: “...We must listen to Him [O’nu] before everyone else. We must think over His words. We do not sufficiently teach Him; we must do. The ones who oppose Him for various reasons, again seek refuge in Him when they run into trouble¹⁵...” (Yücel, 1972, p.191-192). If these lines are isolated, one can take them for a section in Qur’an or hadith which refer only to God (Allah) in the third person capital. Atatürk’s sacralization speaks to the consecration of the Turkish language at the hand of a literary institution as a state apparatus.

Against such mysticization, Adak rereads Halide Edib Adıvar’s (1953) play *Masks or Souls?* through Vaclav Havel arguing that “in

¹⁵ “...Her zaman, herkesten çok O’nu dinlemeliyiz. Kâfi derecede O’nu öğretmiyoruz. Öğretmeliyiz. Ona, türlü sebeplerden en karşıt olanlar bile başları sıkıştığı zaman gene O’na sığınmaktadırlar...”

the last scene of *Masks or Souls?* the masses created by teleology of modernity were turned into robots in prison jumpsuits without any authenticity and individuality. The end of positivist Republican ideal is not ‘a laic paradise’, but is an absolute ‘nightmare’” (Adak, 2016, p.172). Adivar, then, foresees the tragedy of a mechanical Westernisation in a dystopian future.

Adak and Altınay, accordingly, project on “methodological nationalism” of the feminist scholarship “on women [that] remained oblivious to questions of ethnicity, whereby a critical attitude to nationalism and the recognition of nations as modern, historical constructs does not guarantee a framework of analysis that does not reproduce some of the basic assumptions of nationalism” (2010, p.14-15). The latest feminist scholarship, however, has begun to overcome this problem interrogating the issues of ethnicity, i.e. Kurdish women’s struggle in their discussions.

The Dialectics of Religion, Literature, and the Women Writer

The nationalist modernization movements had already begun in the 18th century, two centuries before the foundation of the Republic. Hence, Republican reforms mark the continuation of the Ottoman modernization efforts, and do not characteristically assert an epistemic “rupture” as sometimes bluntly articulated. On Sufism’s shaping of modernity in Turkey, Brian Silverstein (2007) aptly pinpoints that the domestication of Islam into [chiefly] a religion in Turkey is “a *fait accompli* [which] results superficially from the Republican reforms but more substantially from centuries of Ottoman institutional reform and incremental shifts in the authority and prestige of Islamic regimes of knowledge and power vis-a-vis other ones” (p.59). Print capitalism in the 19th century as Benedict Anderson (2006) conveys, already necessitated the simplification of the Ottoman orthography and inaugurated the nationalist tendencies (p.44-45). Since the alphabet reform in 1928, largely accepted by the scholars as being the most radical of all the Republican reforms rendering the Ottoman modernization reforms obscure, continuity of Ottoman literary mo-

dernity throughout the Republican period has been overwhelmingly swept aside.

Recent scholarship continues to bring out a more nuanced relationship between state and religion, which is grounded in state's perpetual control and promulgation of one religious sect, satisfying the goal of religious unity in addition to that of linguistic and national unities. Transition from empire to nation-state did not necessarily culminate in transformation within the governing state structure as the historian Erik Jan Zürcher (2010) claims; rather the nation-state has inherited the empire's authoritarian institutionalization (p.282). Şerif Mardin (2006) also observed that the new Republic is founded on "the ancient ideal of the preservation of the state. Systems for training the bureaucrats might have changed, but the Ottoman tradition that the state counted more than individuals had remained... Gradually, concern for the state was transformed into an ideology of nascent nationalisms" (p.196). One can easily decipher the selfsame rhetoric of "the continuity of the state" (*devletin bekâsı*) by each hitherto government even at the expense of its people. Andrew Davison (2003) further suggests that abolishing caliphate in the name of laicism "actually created a new structure of control and oversight between the state and Islam in which the republic's founders sought to use the powers of state to interpret, oversee, and administer (including financially) religious doctrine and practice" (p.338). Ayşe Kadioğlu (2010) complicates the matter conveying that state Islam was advocated by Turkish republican laicism "furthering national solidarity and integration in order to attain the larger goal of westernization. Accordingly, the state's relations with its non-Muslim citizens involved increasingly more discriminatory practices. Moreover, all conflicts between the state and folk Islam were assessed in terms of progress versus reaction" (p.497).

If we scrutinize the historical present paying attention to the discourses by the so called nationalists and the Islamists regarding the ethnic and religious minorities, we can, in fact, easily behold a consensus in their hostile rhetoric towards these communities whose struggle for equality is, in their words, an obstacle to "the continuity of the state." These intersecting comments, therefore, are pivotal

in understanding the conceptual, institutional, empirical dis/continuities between empire and nation-state, the latter not only attempting to control language promoting a purified, homogenous one (a modified Turkish), but also religion promoting its own homogenous version (a modified Sunni-Islam).

Women, in particular, become the show window of state control, which rendered “uncontrolled” religion (Islam) as “backward” as Kadioğlu (2010) notes: “Headscarves have become a symbol of backwardness since they represent an Islam that is not subservient to the state. Today, women with headscarves are viewed as dangerous not simply because they are religious but rather because they represent a challenge to the control of the state over Islam” (p.497).

Beginning with the foundation of the republic, state control on folk Islam and Islamic attire not only marginalized the pious women but via a systemic defeminization also exerted its oppression on the secular women as such,. Referring to the protagonist Aysel in Ağaoğlu’s (1973) *Lying Down to Die*, Gürle suggests that the criticism against the Kemalist ideology renders itself apparent in the novel’s implication that the republican woman could exist as long as she undresses her femininity and becomes an ideal model for the new becoming nation-state:

Taught to be a strong, independent woman, she discovers, in the barren personal space of the hotel room, that she has been castrated by the regime...(97). The Kemalist public sphere, therefore, though it seemed socially inclusive, was limited by a precondition. Women were invited there not as private individuals entitled to their own opinions but as the bearers of the ideology of the regime...they were allowed to appear in the public sphere only as ‘an idea.’ (Gürle, 2014, p.96-97).

Not only the leftist, secularist but also the Islamic subaltern became the actors in this literary resistance to this new state of the religion controlled by the nation-state. 1970-1980’s boom of *Islamic bildungsroman* (“*hidayet romanları*”) welcomes a rereading of this subaltern subject whose subjectivity was continuously humiliated by the practices of a radical state-secularism, which strictly controlled the public visibility of Islam while ardently mobilizing its institutionalized discourse elsewhere. Proliferation of women writers with or

without headscarves simultaneous with the male writers with religious sensitivities during the 1980s has contributed to a misleading (and orientalized) category of “conservative literature”. Ironically, the very concept of “conservative” is at times utilized to describe a pseudo “progressive” ideology such as Kemalism as Ağaoğlu above discerns in her novel. Literary criticism, which is more ideologically motivated than literarily, needs also to deconstruct such non literary categories, condescending to scrutinize this body of literature.¹⁶ Although I do not attribute the predominance of “women postmodernist writers” to “the broad range of new languages [that] postmodernism has offered to historically underrepresented or marginalized voices” as Azade Seyhan (2001) suggests, contemporary Turkish writing is vastly diversified, but more resulting from an increasing resistance of literary language against the official (p.170).¹⁷

Religion and literature have had a dialectical hold on each other since the formation of the secular state. To the extent that the new nation-state utilized religious rhetoric adhering to Sunni-Islamic branch in official discourses, writers of the new secular-republic, which might seem paradoxical, also collaborated to benefit from the unifying power of an orthodox Islam in order to help fashion a new nation. When religion was crucified as backwardness on the public sphere, at the same time, it served an integral part of the literary discourse particularly in the narratives on WWI and Independence War of Turkey as put to debate by the literary critics. In the beginning of 1950s, although (state) religion has ceased to lose its grip on narratives as state propaganda, religion prominently as a heterodox belief system has continued to shape the literary sphere in

¹⁶ Ahmet Sait Akçay’s (2006) *Bellekteki Huriler / İslamcı Popülist Kültüre Eleştirel Bakış* is one such introductory source notwithstanding the sarcasm in its title. Also see Cihan Aktaş’s (2007) *Bir Hayat Tarzı Eleştirisi: İslamcılık* for a discussion on the sociology of Islamism with a feminist perspective.

¹⁷ The literary works by Adalet Ağaoğlu, Sevim Burak, Leyla Erbil and Latife Tekin among others, for instance, fostered a new generation of prominent (women) writers such as Aslı Erdoğan, Sema Kaygusuz, Perihan Mağden and Ayfer Tunç among many as a result of a literary revival sparked by what I will call a negative enlightenment, which put into question the tremendous impact of the (masculine) nationalist state tradition on the society, thereby obliging the writers to exploit the tools of the literary language to mitigate multifarious violence(s) of the past swaying the present.

the modernist writings of say Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) and Peyami Safa (1899-1961). Modes of writing *the* religion with its heterogeneity in the modern and contemporary Turkish literary works await the literary-historical critical attention since despite the contrary holistic interpretations of the present, religion like language, harbors ambivalence, and therefore, catalyzes resistance to statist regularizations.

Epilogue

“Literature is compensation for the destructiveness of life, not only as memory but also as *utopian* resistance against violence of history. It resists not only by remembering but also by imagining an alternative to the past” wrote Sibel Irzık in her poignant commentary on Yaşar Kemal’s (2004) trilogy *An Island Story* (2013, p.59). Disillusionment with the Kemalist utopia as Oğuz Atay’s (1972) magnum opus *The Disconnected* brilliantly evoked is partially due to non-identitarian ethnographic and archival research as well as to the flourishing of the publishing market within which minority writers and writers writing from the outside could find a voice. Despite the state’s efforts to obviate the literary as well as sociological and political memory, contemporary scholarship is decisively dedicated to archive this body of literature. Literary criticism on Turkish literature, perhaps, has never been as radically heterogeneous thanks to the myriad literary magazines and to new branch of scholars who are trained in comparative literary studies including but not limited to Ottoman, Turkish, Euro-American Literatures and Comparative Literary Studies.

One can, yet, ask whether writing in Turkish has fully stripped of its state ideological orientation to finally face epistemic and physical oppressions also against *other* languages, alphabets, religions, ethnic groups, gender and sexualities. As the sociologist Fatma Müge Göçek (2015) aptly argues in *Denial of Violence*, violence against the (ethnic) minorities persists today since the nation-state after the empire has not acknowledged its violence against the Armenians, on the contrary, has been using distorted information

to deny it in collaboration with its institutions such as the Turkish Language Society (TDK), Turkish Historical Society (TTK), and the state funded diaspora organizations outside the country (p.2). Adak suggested that Turkish Literature lacks ethical conversations on past violences, and yet “Adivar’s apology letter written before the WW1 could have been a pioneering text. In this letter, Adivar mourns for all the victims exposed to violence, transferring her personal reaction against the Armenian massacre to the reader as being full of guilt and responsibility” (p.37). Adak, however, mentions the shift in Adivar’s writing after the war positining herself with the defenders of atrocities against the Armenians. As such, Ayhan’s poetry even in the 1950s resisted the homegenizing power of the state via self-assuredly giving voice to the forgotten. The evident gap in the literary discourse notwithstanding, contemporary works like *Snow* deepen the scar narrating characters who are perpetually left with a humiliating burden inflicted upon them by the violent nation-state, or like *Har* which opens to critique the violence in history as well as in the language. More recent literary texts fearlessly open to debate the official histories of the state, and if I may say, walk on the road that Ayhan’s “civil” poetry has paved.

Literary critical study when carried out literally *critically* pinning its needles on its worn out methodologies, at first, might help disclose a turning away from the state sponsored oppression perpetuated by such denial (and violence) as part of the nationalist ideology, and thus can teach us about confrontation with past mistakes at least on the literary level. The literary scholar of Turkish should, then, begin with deconstructing her literary critical vocabulary problematizing the lexical nationalism, which has been taken for granted. Despite a positively growing number of literary and critical production against such violent centrisms, ethno-logocentric conception of the word/world, arguably, still poses a threat to Turkish literary production and to its criticism. My goal within the scope of this article was, taking Parla’s gesture, to stir a dialogue with the literary academia for a wider international literary-critical collaboration than attempting to tackle, as an individual scholar, the overarching methodological issues of the Turkish Literary History. This, indeed, requires an ant-

hology size international and interdisciplinary collaborative labor. Such an engagement, however, would not only break the intimidation experienced differently by the unjustifiably dichotomized local and international literary scholars, it would, above all, obligate the specialist in Turkish to lower the stakes of a futile linguistic arrogance concentrated on the writer's language, which she also claims her own, and to fasten her attention instead, expanding on Bakhtin's novelistic discourse, on the literary language and its stylistics overarching all (non)genres, ergo on the literary text's acts, delineating its aesthetics and politics (2002, p.263).

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