

EAST-WEST ENTANGLEMENTS: PAMUK, ÖZDAMAR, DERRIDA

by

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ABSTRACT

In my dissertation titled *East-West Entanglements: Pamuk, Özdamar, Derrida*, I analyze the representation of cultural, linguistic, and religious tensions chronicled by these authors who have variously inhabited Western and non-Western worlds. They all problematize the complicated relations between memory and identity within and without the borders of the modern nation state. I argue that their works address existing multicultural situations, which arise from diverging and converging histories, and remind us that we can no longer inhabit segregated states of being.

In the face of multi-referential modes of living in the 21st century, these authors suggest malleable and hybrid readings of entangled collectivities. Attention to the entanglements that overwhelm temporal, linguistic, and cultural boundaries is salutary, because it challenges the conceptual model based on mutually exclusive dichotomies, and calls into play the network of filiations that generate an ongoing interaction among conflicting singularities.

I propose that Pamuk, Özdamar, and Derrida accommodate the ever-shifting ways of interaction on the levels of both content and form. They offer examples of grafted genre that accentuate the resemblances in difference across various generic forms. The grafted narratives they construct supersede and re-formulate the permeable boundaries between self and other, and call attention to the many Easts and Wests, enmeshed as they are in one another.

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1 INTRODUCTORY NOTES

1.1 Toward a New Comparative Vocabulary: Reading Methodology

In *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak observes that “since 1992, three years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the discipline of comparative literature has been looking to renovate itself... presumably in response to the rising tide of multiculturalism and cultural studies” (1). When comparative literature as a discipline first emerged, comparison implied an emphasis on either similarities or differences. The discipline concentrated mainly on Western literature and looked outwards. The goal was to reach “universal excellence,” which led to canon formations. Later on, in reaction to this universalizing Eurocentrism, literary critics began to place greater emphasis on incommensurable differences, which led to a process of fragmentation into closed identities and culturalist ideologies. I contend that Eurocentric universalism and anti-Eurocentric identitarianism reciprocally maintain one another and legitimize the hierarchy; and, neither one offers an accurate picture of the potentials of comparative literary studies.

The renovation that is to take place in the discipline of comparative literature involves a necessary break with the kind of reading that seeks purely sameness or difference through “map-making literary criticism,” (Spivak, *Discipline* 6) because such an approach works against the possibility of a creative literary analysis. Rather than regressing to the hegemonic collectivity of globalization, and its repressive hierarchical classifications (good/bad literature, high/low culture), or retreating into closed subjectivities, and proudly announce that only an Arab can understand another Arab, we must consider, in Spivak’s words, “nonexhaustive taxonomies” and “unpredictable filiations” (*Discipline* 6). Such effortful “active teleopoiesis” (*Discipline* 31) requires that we seek new combinations and comparative contexts to enable us to cross boundaries between diverse genres, and cultural and linguistic legacies overlapping in a global context.

Crossing boundaries does not mean that the occluded borders can or should be dismantled altogether; they can, however, be rendered flexible. I embarked upon this project with this hope, and shifted my critical focus from oppositional binaries to *entanglements* on a number of levels. My dissertation titled *East-West Entanglements: Pamuk, Özdamar, Derrida* sheds light on thematic, generic, linguistic, temporal, and geographical entanglements in the works of the three writers. I analyze the representation of cultural, ethnic, and religious tensions chronicled by these authors who have variously inhabited Western and non-Western worlds.

The Turkish author Pamuk, the Turkish-German author Özdamar, and the French-Algerian philosopher Derrida all problematize the complicated relations between cultural memory and identity within and without the borders of the modern nation state. I argue that their works address existing multicultural situations that arise from diverging and converging histories. The different formulations of the East-West entanglement in their works remind us that we can no longer inhabit segregated states of being. In the face of multi-referential modes of living in the 21st century, these authors offer examples of grafted writing to accommodate the new ways of interaction.

My position is that there are many Easts and Wests imagined in reference to one another, and entangled through cultural and historical legacies. These entanglements supersede, resist, and overwhelm the boundaries erected to occlude the interlacing of communities in a global context. Ironically, the means of segregation and exclusion become possible venues for inclusion and interrelation. Attention to these entanglements is salutary, because it suggests malleable and hybrid readings of entangled communities across diverse geo-political locations. I contend that this manner of reading literary and philosophical texts can lead to new energies in the field of comparative literature. Therefore out of this project comes a comparative methodology, which invites a dialogic engagement of different voices and cultures, by questioning the undecideable

borders between self and other. What I propose here is a comparative approach, which accentuates the points of tension between sameness and difference, universal and singular, without yielding to either one. What Derrida, Pamuk, and Özdamar show us is that it is possible and productive to perceive cultures and literatures in terms of their vitality in a diversity of approaches.

The metaphor of “entanglement” has a number of connotations. For some, it invokes romantic entanglement, bond; for others, it implies a problematic knot that needs to be untangled. I use this metaphor with neither positive nor negative implications; it displays both tendencies simultaneously, positive and negative, entangled as they are in each other. I argue that we can conceive of entanglement as providing a matrix for a dynamic network of relations, variably loosening and tightening, both risky and promising. A recognition of the entanglements can strengthen the peaceful tendencies, because wherever there is a space of relation, there is a sensitized understanding of resemblance in difference. Hence it is helpful to envision a space of confrontation, where hierarchical models are replaced by potential venues for co-operation.

I shall now briefly discuss how I arrived at this project, to give the reader an insight into how the dissertation evolved. Throughout the writing process interesting comparative contexts and combinations took shape, at times to my surprise, which challenged this kind of counteractive thinking on a number of levels. Among the several directions toward which this dissertation leads are thematic entanglements (that challenge oppositional binaries of Islam/modernity, Turkey/Europe); generic entanglements (which throw light on hybrid genres, and their means of accommodating a wide range of voices and multiple genealogies); temporal entanglements (across the paradigms of modernity and postmodernity; continuities/ruptures from the late nineteenth century onward); linguistic entanglements (translingual heteroglossia and

code-mixing); and finally, geographical entanglements (East and West, Europe and the Middle East; transnational connections).

1.2 An Autobiography of the Project

My first meaningful encounter with the work of Derrida took place during a graduate course in Comparative Literature, which I took in my second year at the University of British Columbia. The course began with a reading of selected chapters from *Of Grammatology*, and concentrated on a wide range of Derrida's writings on language, writing, democracy, and hospitality. My initial interest in Derrida derived from a curiosity toward the role of language and writing in re-defining the dynamic between self and other, personal and collective. A close reading of Derrida's *oeuvre*, written almost entirely in response to other figures from Western intellectual history, enabled me to study his ideas in relation to ancient thinkers such as Plato and St. Augustine, and more contemporary philosophers from the continental tradition such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger.

Aside from his rigorous knowledge of and ongoing conversations with philosophers and writers preceding him, what distinguishes Derrida from many other philosophers is that he is a writer-philosopher-historian. Essentialist notions of identity and universalist ideals of philosophy do not find a safe place in his work. When Derrida writes about philosophy, he always reflects a concern with the "history" of "Western" philosophy, its premises and fissures. In this respect, Derrida's work testifies to the contemporary challenges brought to the rigorous oppositional distinctions of Western modernity. He moves from a hierarchical to a hybrid reading of the interrelations between literature and philosophy, reason and faith, truth and fiction, hence enabling his readers to trace a network of filiations and entanglements where we expect to encounter binaries and rigid boundaries.

This manner of thinking of binaries proves resourceful in re-visiting the question of identity in existing multicultural situations in contemporary society. I was particularly intrigued by the possibility of questioning the East-West entanglement from a Derridean perspective, hoping to develop a lens through which to perceive the East-West tension in an alternative light. Politically and culturally speaking, East and West have been juxtaposed to one another as absolute opposites for centuries, but what do we really find beyond such stereotypical representations and under the domain of these names “East” and “West”?

In the debates concerning the East-West relationship, we often come across the inflexible “bridge metaphor,” which assumes two mutually exclusive worlds, East and West, which can only come into contact by means of one’s sense of cultural inferiority in relation to the other, or through a severe clash of civilizations. Although the bridge metaphor seems to take dialogue as a foundation, and therefore has a positive overtone, it connotes ahistorical and essentialist identity models, by privileging genealogical notions of origin and purity. Moreover it gives rise to the center-periphery model. Whether it is the imagined East or the imagined West that is the “center” varies according to those who adopt the model to promote self-valorizing polarities.

In developing a lens through which to perceive the East-West tension in terms of a dynamic entanglement, I call into question the center-periphery model. My aim, however, is not merely to recount the marginal position of East *vis à vis* West, or Orient *vis à vis* Occident. As Edward Said notes in *Orientalism*, “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (1-2). By that account, Orientalism can be seen as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). But there are other complications. For example, in Turkey, different groups have used the image of Europe/West to create hierarchical divisions within their homeland. This act of self-colonization, which I will discuss in the first chapter, cannot be reduced to a simple East-West, Orient-

Occident divide. What is at stake are simultaneously Orient responding to Occident, Occident dominating Orient, Orient restructuring Orient, and so forth. In these various ways of relating to one another, there are several Orients and Occidents, Easts and Wests, whose boundaries remain more supple than definite. In this respect, my view complicates Said's argument. What Said calls "flexible *positional* superiority" (7) of West over the Orient holds true for the many centers and margins that become entangled in the works of the three writers I study. These authors highlight a number of complexities following different paths; Derrida, for example, underlines the obscure power dynamics by inquiring into the limit between the colonizer and the colonized.

The fact that I question dichotomous East-West divisions from several angles does not imply that I turn to Homi Bhabha's conceptual models such as the "third space" or the "in between." In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha critiques "the act of going *beyond*" (4) as teleological progress, and proposes a third space, the "interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity" (4). Bhabha assumes incommensurable differences between fixed binaries and calls into play the third space in reaction to them. My argument differs from Bhabha's in that I do not work with two fixed points of identification and the lingering in between. Rather than oppositional and stable binaries with incommensurable differences, I trace entangled aporias that co-habit and retain resemblances in difference. Whereas Bhabha uses a spatial metaphor, I work with a temporal metaphor that underlines the historicity and the interconnectedness of conflicting discourses. I suggest that in the ever-shifting space of relation, antagonistic identities both affirm their own position and respond to the other, thus sustaining a productive interaction, although the final reconciliation is indeterminately deferred.

Turkey, in particular, has become the symbolic figure of the "bridge" between Europe and the Middle East. My position is that this imaginary "bridge" arrests us within an ahistorical and

immutable spatial metaphor, which subordinates the present and the future to the narratives of the past. Therefore, a re-evaluation of this bridge or this borderline territory in Turkey is crucial for future reconfigurations of the East-West relationship in broader Europe. Seeking a more productive and malleable means of conceptualizing the multicultural collectivities in a global context, I took the political-religious tensions in Turkey as a starting point. Orhan Pamuk is an author with whom I have been familiar since my youth, and in particular his novel *Snow* (2004) plays a pivotal role in resisting the rigid models of identity in both Turkey and Europe. I offer a reading of *Snow* in the first chapter of my dissertation as a case study of the quasi-self-colonizing dynamic that exists within the margins of a nation still coming to terms with the radical Westernization it has undergone from the mid-nineteenth century onward. The events that gave shape to Turkey at the turn of the century lead to a variety of questions concerning the roles of the many Easts and Wests that have contributed to the making of the modern nation-state following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. As Azade Seyhan notes, Pamuk's novel offers a complex picture of the "fortunes of a land entangled in the thorny ramifications of its past and the pressures of conforming to the dictates of modernity" ("Seeing").

In the second chapter, I provide a broader framework to the project by bringing in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's collection of stories titled *Mother Tongue* (1994). Özdamar discusses similar issues as Pamuk, but she provides the perspective of a woman and a transnational agent writing from within the borderland cultures. In the transition from the first to the second chapter, the dissertation moves from a national to a transnational context and takes on an expanding trajectory. The East-West question becomes a thread that runs through the border between Turkey and Germany as well as marking the boundary within a divided Germany. Özdamar uses language as the entry point into the intermittent reconciliation of different cultures, and

challenges the representation of immigrants as an inflexible bridge between two mutually exclusive worlds.

What has been interesting in the process of working on these two authors, with Derrida's theoretical work in mind, is the way in which each writer provided me with a different way of looking at one another's work. Initially, Derrida's theoretical writings opened a venue through which to reconfigure the identity models circulating within and without the borders of the modern Turkish state. Over time, a study of Pamuk's and Özdamar's works helped me to consider what is at stake in approaching Derrida as a writer of French-Algerian background. *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin* (1998) particularly captured my attention due to its multiple concerns. *Monolingualism* is both a theoretical treatise on the structural limits of our possession of language and the possibilities opened up by these limitations, and a testimonial account of the Francophone Sephardic Jew who grew up in colonial Algeria. Through the double bind of language, Derrida offers a critique of both Algerian cultural/national purism and French-European hegemony. In this respect, he invites intriguing comparisons with the texts of Pamuk and Özdamar.

Rather than treating Derrida as a theorist whose "universally" valid analysis should be applied or imposed onto the literary texts, in the third chapter, I approach him as a writer who reflects on the colonial history shared by France and Algeria, and as a philosopher who complicates the way we think of self and language by calling into question the assumptions inherent in the genre of autobiography. I followed the present sequence, where the Derrida chapter comes last, in order to first treat each work on the basis of its own merit, and then to trace the threads that run through each chapter and each text in response to one another. Interesting combinations and pairings began to emerge from this process.

For example, while all three writers are concerned with nationalism to a certain extent, language and the sense of belonging to a community that comes with linguistic identity are of particular importance to Özdamar and Derrida, the two exilic writers. Whereas Pamuk and Özdamar remain critical of both Westernist and anti-Westernist nationalisms in Turkey and Germany, Derrida dismantles anti-Westernist Algerian nationalism and pro-Westernist colonialism, which respectively construct myths of origin to contrast East and West. Algeria's colonial history with France invites interesting comparisons with Turkey's relationship to Europe. Through its complex relationship to the West, Algeria, much like Turkey, has a great potential for reformulating the East-West relationship through a model of entanglements, by revealing the ambiguity as well as the richness of the cross-bred cultural mosaic. Situated at the Mediterranean, European, and Middle Eastern crossroads, Turkey and Algeria share the polyglot and the multi-ethnic heritage of the Ottoman Empire. The writers I study try to understand today's cultural mosaic and its tensions in relation to this legacy. They call into question the value of national boundaries, as well as the notions of purity and origin, by writing across diverse cities such as Kars-Istanbul-Frankfurt-Berlin-Algiers-Paris.¹

I cast a wide net in this dissertation, both in terms of the expanding trajectory of its geographical breadth, and its cross-generic structure. Attention to the circulation, assimilation, resistance, and overlap, which occur in the boundaries of different literary traditions is crucial for revealing the multi-referential complexity of literary history. A reading of Pamuk's novel is more rewarding when coupled with a reading of Özdamar who looks at similar issues from the perspective of borderland cultures, or by Dostoyevsky whose novel *Devils* inspired Pamuk to

¹ In fact, these writers' use of diverse cities, and the movement/migration in between, opens a new venue for future research. A look at the depictions of city and architecture as a means of remembering and re-interpreting the cross-cultural mosaic across the Mediterranean and European crossroads—from the perspective of bilingual writers—is a project that needs to be developed.

write *Snow*; similarly Özdamar can be better understood in relation to Turkish authors like Pamuk, to German writers of theatre like Brecht or to other exilic writers like Derrida who have a sensitized understanding of the role that language plays in self-making.

Moreover, an inquiry into the East-West relationship between Europe and the Middle East can be more productive when understood from the perspective of Derrida's theory of autobiography, which challenges the way we think of the tight thread that keeps memory, history and identity intact. If we think of the quest for identity as an act of memory, then Derrida's understanding of autobiography is an ongoing process, during which we fail to capture a sealed interiority. This failure enables an opening toward the other. The opening, whereby identity is marked by "a breach, a sort of opening, play, indetermination "signifying hospitality for what is to come [*l'avenir*]" (*A Taste* 31) is an opportunity to acknowledge the broader range of choices available to us in dealing with the "other" and to produce solutions. Through this opening towards the future we can begin to perceive history as developing in self-generating complexity, not in terms of overcoming or transcending linearity. In this respect, we can think of Pamuk, Özdamar, and Derrida as writers of the future, who allow room for undecideable future formulations of the increasingly multicultural social interactions. They invite "a desire without a horizon" and "a promise that no longer expects what it waits for" (*Monolingualism* 73).

If our understanding of history is directly correlated with the way we remember the past through the narratives we construct for ourselves, then literature and philosophy offer us a broad range of choices for dealing with the past. Derrida uses history against philosophy when confronted with essentialist and ahistorical claims, by asserting the historicity of these theoretical assumptions; and he uses philosophy against history, whose monologic narratives must be analyzed and dismantled. In this respect, he makes an intriguing companion to Pamuk and

Özdamar, who use literature against history to call attention to the contested translations of western modernity into disjunctive new idioms.

1.3 Re-membering in Form and Content

The three writers I investigate in this dissertation share the common task of doing justice to memory and the word by interrupting history's jealousy for a self-enfolded, monologic identity. The sense of justice suggested here can be understood in relation to Derrida's differentiation of two types of remembrance: law and justice. Law is archival, selective, universal, calculable, and prophetic; its attempt "to recollect and gather the past into a harmonious whole always follows the path of a circular economy. Economy, from the Greek *oikonomia*, has its origin in the words *oikos* (home) and *nomos* (law). Economy is literally the law or management (*nemein*) of one's home" (Dooley 9). Justice, by contrast, embodies the *singularity of contexts*; it is contextual, circumstantial, inclusive, and excessive. This excess is an indication of the work of mourning, which makes it impossible to return home, to follow the path of a circular economy. As Derrida remarks, "the instant one loses sight of the *excess* of justice, or of the future, in that very moment the conditions of totalization would, undoubtedly, be fulfilled" (*A Taste* 22). In the gap opened between law and justice lies the acknowledgement of a history, where "no epoch ever has the practical self-sufficiency" (Dooley 58); all history remains open and questionable.

It is this excess, this insatiable jealousy, which reminds us, to borrow Spivak's words, that "one must not *make* history in a deliberate way. One must respect the earth's tone" ("Acting Bits" 793-794). Instead of economizing, censoring, circumscribing the many histories that simultaneously co-habit, the three writers in question show a "resistance against cultural amnesia that denies the historical legitimacy of different identities" (Seyhan, *Writing* 150). They complicate the relationship between memory and identity as the act of re-membering in their

works disturbs the notion of membership to a closed community or nation. The word “member/ing” here can be understood in relation to its multiple meanings: as re-membering, the act of memory that weaves together a *bricolage* of fragmented images; as membership in a community, or ownership of a group identity; and, as re-membering or pasting together of several genres. These writers accommodate multiple genealogies, with their positive and negative tendencies, and articulate ever-shifting patterns of identity by using grafted genres.

In other words, their writing reflects a concern with mourning and boundary crossing on the levels of both content and form. Thematic concerns are not simply represented in their works, but embodied by the generic structure of the texts. They produce hybrid texts, which participate in several genres, and offer several means of accommodating the grafted communities that ebb and flow into each other with a wave-like movement. For example, Derrida combines poetic language with autobiography and philosophy; Özdamar mixes prose with poetry, songs, and Koranic recitations, and switches languages; Pamuk writes a metafictional novel, which consists of witness accounts, diagrams, newspaper articles, and several author-narrators. The genre-trespassing in their writing throws light on the question of genre, as Derrida reminds us, “literary genre but also gender, genus, and taxonomy more generally” (“Law of Genre” 221). Pamuk, Özdamar, and Derrida create multi-generic texts that give form to entangled taxonomies of various national and ethnic communities.

The novelty of my dissertation lies in the multi-layered reading approach I develop in response to these texts. I combine a philosophical treatment of Pamuk’s and Özdamar’s literary works with a literary analysis of Derrida’s theoretical writings. As they displace the frontiers between different genres and disciplines, they shed critical light on the stereotypical receptions of the institutions of literature and philosophy. The conventional view that philosophy is the representation of unchanging, universal truths unaffected by history and that literature is the sum

of fictive constructions equally detached from history and truth-value does not find a safe place in their works. I read their texts at once as semi-autobiographical accounts, national biographies, and literary-philosophical reflections that re-visit old problems returning in complex structures.

As I emphasized before, Derrida's theory of autobiography proves relevant in calling forth the autobiographical aspect of all the three works in question because of the ways in which they react to the idealized narratives and self-fulfilling prophecies privileged in the *Bildungsroman*, where all outward movement returns to the circular self-enclosed subjectivity of the novel's "hero," where essence consummates itself through teleological development. In contrast to a recollection backwards, whereby every step taken toward the future takes the subject closer to the past, they treat memory not as a recollection forward, but as an inexhaustible historical opening to the future. Seen from this perspective, the texts I will analyze are autobiographies with a taste for the secret, which carries the self into a space of relation with the other.

My dissertation makes an important contribution not only to the existing scholarship on Turkish, Turkish-German, and French-Algerian literatures, and to the East-West debate, but also to the discussions surrounding diasporic and autobiographical writing. I provide a new comparative context as the three writers I bring together have never been studied in relation to one another. While there is a book by Venkat Mani titled *Cosmopolitical Claims*, which briefly discusses the work of several authors including Pamuk and Özdamar, it does not offer a close reading of the particular works and themes I am focussing on. There is no critical source that visits the works of Pamuk and Özdamar in relation to Derrida.

My purpose in working with these three eclectic writers is to get a hold of shifting geopolitical identities in a global context. I hope to communicate the urgency of acknowledging what is at stake in thinking of entangled collectivities through the narratives we construct for

ourselves. The collectivity I have in mind works neither toward sameness/inclusion nor toward difference/exclusion. I envision what Spivak terms “textured collectivities” (*Discipline* 46), whose *ethos* is to be found in their resemblances in difference, and outside the repressive moral despotism of the single-body community taking shape under the currents of globalizing hegemony or nationalist identitarianism.

The idea of a united humanity with a single language has been deconstructed through the story of the Tower of Babel. Now it is the task of Comparative Literature to attest and to remain hospitable to the multitude of overlapping and contradictory voices speaking in plural tongues. As Spivak reminds us, it was through “inter-European hospitality” (*Discipline* 8) that the discipline of Comparative Literature arose when many intellectuals such as Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach fled to Turkey and other places to escape totalitarian regimes. Their position reminds us that crossing borders is an effortful and rewarding act. It requires “a responsibility that announces itself as contradictory because it inscribes us from the very beginning of the game into a kind of necessarily double obligation, a *double bind*” (Derrida, *Other Heading* 29). Even if, at times, “there is a desert without a desert crossing,” (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 72) we continue to cross-over, translate, make the borders flexible, and allow room for movement to contribute to the dissemination of a new cultural and political awareness that stresses the co-habitation of multiple histories.

2 SELF-COLONIALISM IN SNOW

2.1 Introduction: “Otherness” within Turkey, and between Turkey and Europe

In *The Other Heading: Reflections of Today’s Europe*, Jacques Derrida remarks that “it is always in the figure of the *Western* heading² and of the *final* headland or point that Europe determines and cultivates itself” (25). One could perhaps slightly alter this statement and propose at once that it is often in the figure of the Western heading, mapped out as the site of modernization, that Turkey has cultivated itself for almost two centuries.

The roots of the Westernizing cultural reforms in Turkey can be traced to *Tanzimat Dönemi*, the period of reformation, which began in 1839 and was characterized by attempts to modernize the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman state in the nineteenth century was more than six hundred years old, and weakened by the increasing nationalist rebellions among the ethnic communities under the rule of the Empire. In this period, several westernizing reforms, especially in military forces and cultural life, were reinforced to save the empire by strengthening its relations with Europe. These *Tanzimat* reforms were designed both to modernize the empire and to forestall foreign intervention. Much of the Ottoman system was reorganized along largely French lines.

Despite this urgent turn toward the West, however, Ottoman culture during *Tanzimat* continued to rely heavily on Islamic traditions. As Parla informs us in *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri (Fathers and Sons: The Epistemological Origins of*

² Used in the sense of “direction, course, steering” as well as “title.” The French word *cap* in the original text denotes head(ing), headland; “Western *cap*” as the capital of culture, the headland of thought.

the Tanzimat Novel), the writers of this period did not perceive the East-West question as a mental duality. Many of them retained the belief that Westernization was but a controlled translation of Western cultural elements into the Eastern tradition, which had to be preserved. In a time when the authority of the Islamic culture and of the Sultan and Caliphate came under threat, they contended that it was the novelist's task to serve as a father figure on the literary level, to provide a moral compass, and to dictate the necessary boundaries of the changing East-West dynamics.

In the following decades, however, particularly for the generation that helped establish the Turkish Republic in 1923 and witnessed the transitional period between the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Turkish nation, the East-West question took on a drastically different meaning. At the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was known as the "sick man of Europe." As Seyhan writes,

[t]he new Republic started life with traces and memories of that sickness in the form of financial challenges, illiteracy, and deep division between a minority of educated civil servants, military officers, and intellectuals and a vast majority of impoverished and illiterate peasants and religious and otherwise deeply conservative forces whose loyalty was not to the nation but to the sultanate-caliphate and Islam. Atatürk had to resort to an aggressive and comprehensive treatment that the moment called for. (*Tales* 38)

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938),³ the founder and the first president of the Turkish Republic, "believed that Turkey's future lay with Europe and the West. His intention was to create a European state from the Turkish-Muslim core of the Ottoman Empire through a nationalist, secularist, and authoritarian revolution" (Müftüler-Bac 17). As part of his cultural revolution,⁴

³ The name "Atatürk" means "father Turk, ancestor of Turks," and was given to Mustafa Kemal by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey following the Law on Family Names.

⁴ Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the hands of the Allies in World War I and the subsequent plans for its partition, Mustafa Kemal led the Turkish national movement and the Turkish War of Independence (1919). The final outcome of the independence war was the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923, a modern, democratic, and secular nation-state. Mustafa Kemal re-adjusted the entire social framework, passing a number of reforms from the Hat Law, which outlawed the use of *türban* and other religious symbols and encouraged Western clothing for men and women, to the adaption of the new Turkish alphabet in Latin (rather than Arabic). The

Mustafa Kemal passed on several Westernizing reforms and laws to bring the Turkish nation on equal grounds with the European civilization. He abolished the Sultanate and the Caliphate, which weakened the ties between the new Turkish state and the Middle East by giving up Turkey's previous role as the leader of the world Islamic community.

Turkish republicans interpreted *Tanzimat*, in Parla's view, as a period of mental duality and instability in order to justify the resolutions brought about by the new Republic. This was in a sense a retrospective self-justification. Projecting Turkey as a nation caught between East and West, Mustafa Kemal's Westernizing reforms rationalized the urgent need for a synthesis. The unchanging spatial model employed to describe Turkey's position as a "bridge" between East and West can thus be seen as a consequence of the conceptual framework invented to accommodate the identity of the new Turkish nation-state in the early years of the Republic.

Yet what was implied by synthesis was an epoch-making and self-colonial turning towards the West, adopted as the cultural model. Turkey has never been a colony of Europe, but I employ the term "self-colonial" in reference to the self-inflicted socio-economic power structure within the Turkish nation in response to what the West represents to different political groups. As Meltem Ahıska writes, "Turkey reproduces the reified images of the West to justify its regime of power in its boundary management of dividing spheres, regions, and people along the axis of East and West" (368). According to Pamuk, these divisions are most visible among Turkish Westernizers, who aim "to create a country that is richer, happier, and more powerful... But as part of westward-looking movements, they remain deeply critical of certain basic characteristics of their country and culture [...and] see their culture as defective, sometimes even worthless" ("In Kars" 230-231).

ideological foundation for Mustafa Kemal's reform program became known as Kemalism. Its main points are enumerated in the "six arrows" of Kemalism known as republicanism, nationalism, populism, reformism, statism, and secularism.

My objective in this chapter is to offer a reading of the Turkish author Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow (Kar)* (2004) as a means of both throwing light on this self-colonizing tendency and challenging the bridge metaphor, which assumes two mutually exclusive and stable worlds that frequently come into contact by means of one's sense of cultural inferiority in relation to the other, or through a severe clash of civilizations. Neither trapped between East and West, nor a synthesis of the two, in Irzık's words, Turkey "is rather a country in which many of the fundamental social divisions have been experienced, articulated, concealed, or displaced in a cultural/ideological vocabulary mobilizing the 'West' in different power and justification strategies" ("Introduction" 285). These power strategies are exposed in *Snow*, where the tensions represented between East and West within Turkey can be read as an allegory of the tension in Turkey's relationship to Europe. As several political groups relate their home country to the ideals of Europe, they appeal to different ideological rhetoric, thus complicating Turkey's position as a predominantly Muslim country within the orbit of Europe.

The question of the compatibility of Islamic identity with the secular democracy of Turkey constitutes a major turning point in the country's integration to the European community. As Atila Eralp notes, "the relationship between Europe and Turkey during much of the eighties continued to unfold in terms of competing definitions of democracy" (32). Seen from the European perspective, the lack of a greater autonomy for the expression of Islamic identity in Turkey, where the religious groups were excluded from politics and kept in check by the military since the foundation of the Republic until the 1980s, is a symptom of the deficiency in Turkish democracy. On the one hand, the negotiations with Europe invite Turkey to confront the issue of Islam within a democratic framework. On the other hand, as Müftüler-Bac writes, "just as Turkey's internal structure is influenced by developments in Europe and adapts itself to these external changes, so has Turkey, in its turn, the potential to contribute to the changing European

order” (2); “Turkey is the only secular democracy with a market economy that is also Muslim. For many Europeans this is a contradiction in terms” (12). The strong presence of a secular Muslim country at the margins of Europe calls this “contradiction” into question, and demands that both Turkey and Europe reassess their boundaries in relation to one another. Particularly as the *AKP* (The Justice and Development Party) with religious affiliations came to power in Turkey, following the 2007 elections, the question concerning the role of Islam in a secular world political order returned more forcefully than ever. An analysis of *Snow* is thus crucial in developing a better understanding of the political tensions between the state and the religious groups within Turkey, and the conflicts between Turkey and Europe.

Snow takes place in the 1990s, during a revival of religious movements in different parts of the world, including Turkey, where the pro-Islamic *Refah Partisi* (the Welfare Party) began to receive an increasing share of the national vote. The novel has an intricate plot with several narrative layers, but my focus will be on the tension between the Kemalist and the Islamist groups who call attention to the Eurocentric and anti-Eurocentric programs at work in Turkey in response to Europe as “the final headland.” I will try to determine the value of Europe as name and concept by investigating the currency of this term in the streets of a symbolic city in Turkey. As Irzik observes, “the ‘West’ is a permanent, if shifting, signifier in the language of this public sphere, and it exerts a powerful pressure on the imagining of modern Turkish identity, both positively as a developmental ideal and negatively as the figure of alienation” (“Introduction” 285). My goal is to demonstrate how the different communities depicted in *Snow* use the name of the West to treat Islam and secular modernity as binary political poles, and to overcome the persistent tension by ceasing public debate through violence.

I shall argue that when one comes to examine the poetics of binary opposition, one can often detect an entanglement network. Attention to these entanglements is salutary, because it

reminds us that we can no longer inhabit segregated states of being. Pamuk re-inscribes the boundaries between seemingly exclusive binaries such as Islam and modernity, and demonstrates that these borders remain flexible, even if they cannot be totally dismantled. As Derrida remarks in “Faith and Knowledge,” “*the surge... of Islam will be neither understood nor answered as long as the exterior and interior of this borderline place have not been called into question*” (20). Once we re-evaluate this borderline place in Turkey, we can perhaps begin to understand the otherness within Turkey in relation to the otherness in Turkey’s relationship to Europe.

I use *Snow* because of the kind of example it sets for me in understanding the political-religious tensions and the self-colonial dynamic within the margins of a nation still coming to terms with the radical Westernization that it has undergone from the mid-nineteenth century onward. *Snow* approaches these tensions by tracing the entanglement of Turkey with Europe and the West, but it also enables us, to borrow the words of Şenocak, to delineate “a history of Orient and Occident touching each other (*eine Berührungsgeschichte*), one that does not document the deeds and misdeeds of military generals, but rather one that excavates and decodes European images of Muslims, and Muslim images of Europe” (64). *Snow* helps the reader develop a better understanding of the trespassing, intersecting, overlapping, and diverging paths of different ethnic and religious communities, by interweaving their filiations, and without treating East and West, Turkey and Europe as two distinct civilizations evolving in segregated geographies.

Pamuk takes a historicist approach, and situates his stories in a modern nation still haunted by the remnants of its Ottoman past. *Snow*, like most of Pamuk’s other books, is rich with references to the Ottoman period and culture, and aims to remind the reader of how the social and political life was, preceding the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Rather than encrypting and subordinating the past to the present, he underlines what has been lost and gained in the transition from the Empire to the nation. In an interview with Eleanor Wachtel titled

“Combining East and West,” Pamuk remarks that “if Freud tells you that when something is suppressed it comes back in disguise, then my novels are, in fact, that disguise” (Descant 251). In some respect, his novels serve as memory exercises, which resist the loss of historical consciousness. At the heart of many social and political tensions in present-day Turkey, even the secular-Islam debate, lie the repercussions of the rupture brought about by the nationalization-westernization-modernization movement in the early Republic. A fresh look at the consequences of this movement can provide us with the opportunity to move beyond blind admiration and/or unfounded animosity toward modernity.

As part of Pamuk’s attempt to revive the intricacies of the Ottoman-Turkish history, *Snow* takes place in Kars, the peripheral city in north-eastern Turkey, bordering with Armenia. Kars, a shortened name for the Turkish *Kar-su* (“Snow Water”), was “annexed by Russia during the Russo-Turkish War in 1877-1878, then briefly formed a part of the Democratic Republic of Armenia after World War I until Turkish general Kazım Karabekir re-conquered it in November 1920” (McGaha 157). Taking place in the northeastern Anatolian city of Kars, the story accentuates the controversial Armenian question, which began in the 1920s and lasts to this day. Toward the end of the Ottoman Empire, when nationalist uprisings among different ethnic groups began to increase, the relations between the Armenian community—which formed an important part of the Ottoman population (around 10% of the population in Ottoman Anatolia)—and Muslims, especially the Kurds, intensified. As Zürcher informs us, at the outbreak of World War I, “the Armenian nationalists saw in a Russian victory their chance to achieve the establishment of an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia... [and] joined the Russian army; there were Armenian desertions from the Ottoman army and guerrilla activity behind the Ottoman lines” (120). Zürcher notes that in this period Ottoman Interior Minister Tâlât Pasha ordered the relocation of the entire Armenian population of the war zone to Zor (in the Syrian desert), and that the

relocation, carried out in 1915-16, resulted in many deaths. Today, there is big controversy in Turkey regarding whether this was inter-communal warfare or genocide. The Turkish-Armenian border remains closed to this day, as the accounts regarding what happened almost a century ago are still to be settled.

By situating the story in a peripheral, historical border town marginalized to Turkey, as Turkey is marginalized to the rest of the world, Pamuk accentuates the desolate condition of the city on which “the nation has turned its back... and so had God” (*Snow* 27). The snow surrounds and connects the characters to one another, but it also freezes time, in a way making different time periods and histories overlap and confront one another. The silence invoked by the heavy snowfall hides the contours of the city, and brings out the sounds of history, the ghosts revived in a memorial site. In this respect, Kars functions as a micro-model of Turkey, replete with memories of a once wealthy and harmonious co-existence of multiple cultures, languages, religions and ethnicities under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The palimpsest-like setting of the city also turns it into a theatrical stage, where we simultaneously witness past and present moments of prosperity and devastation. Pamuk uses architecture to bear witness to the changes in Turkish history, and depicts the old buildings of Kars, which were passed on to different hands in the years following the foundation of the Turkish Republic. He mentions “the Kars Police Headquarters... where the old stone buildings that had once belonged to wealthy Russians and Armenians, now housed mostly government offices” (13) and “the run-down single-storey mansion,” (200) which, after the foundation of the Republic, were passed into the hands of one Maruf Bey, who sold wood and leather to the Soviet Union. As the narrator tells us, Maruf Bey kept the mansion for forty-three years until

at the start of the Cold War, the government rounded up the well-known merchants who did business with the Soviet Union, charged them with spying, and carted them off to prison... [then the mansion sat empty for twenty years] In the mid-seventies a club-

wielding Marxist splinter group had seized the building as its headquarters... After the 1980 coup the building was empty for a time, and then... a visionary tailor... having made money in Istanbul and Arabia—turned the other half into a sweatshop. (201)

Architecture, as in this passage, serves as a metaphor that enables readers to envision the polyglot and multi-ethnic legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The descriptions of the city's history also provoke the reader to think about how this cultural mosaic was affected by the rise of nationalism in 1920s and thereafter. Referring to the ongoing Turkish-Armenian problem, and calling attention to the once harmonious co-existence of several ethnicities under one Empire, Pamuk focuses critical attention on the contrast between the periods before and after the coming of the Turkish Republic. As one of the characters in *Snow*, Serdar Bey, the owner of the local newspaper, states “although the people of Kars once lived side by side in happy harmony, in recent years outside forces have turned brother against brother. Disputes between Islamists, secularists, Kurds, Turks, and Azeris drive us asunder for specious reasons” (318). It is this changing dynamic among the conflicting groups such as secular Turks, Islamist Turks, Jacobins, fundamental Islamists, once leftist turned Turkish nationalists, Kurd nationalists, Marxist Kurds, Islamist Kurds that Pamuk depicts by using Kars as a melancholic space.

Snow is in many respects a response to the national identity crisis of the 1980s. The Turkish political theorist Tanıl Bora observes that nationalism has been on the rise in Turkey since the 1990s due to the increasing fragmentation into closed social and cultural identities during the 1980s (71). According to Bora, Turkish capitalism and modernism in the 1980s provided the matrix for those questions repressed throughout the history of the Republic to regain consciousness, hence dividing the population into different ethnic and political groups. In this respect, *Snow* can also be read as a critique of the two types of nationalisms, which took form in Turkey, and are manifested through the characters of Sunay, the Westernist-Jacobin-secular-actor aspiring to be a heroic leader of the belated Turkish Enlightenment and Blue, the Kurdish-Islamic

leader.

While shedding light on the different nationalist discourses in Turkey, Pamuk demonstrates that the West is very much a part of both Sunay's and Blue's identities, whether as a model of positive ideal or negative other. The social and political tensions within the margins of the Turkish nation takes as a basis Westernist and anti-Westernist discourses, proving Ahıska's remark that "the imagined Western gaze is an integral part of [...non-Western] identity" of the marginalized peoples in Turkey (365). The official state ideology in Turkey, being both a Westernizing/modernizing and a culturally authentic/nationalist program, reflects this tension in many respects.

As Konuk puts it, "the modernization reforms promoted sameness with Western Europe but simultaneously maintained a notion of national particularity" (84). If Turkey has struggled to "represent rather than resemble the West," (Konuk 79) as the Turkish intellectual Nurullah Ataç put it, then Pamuk's *oeuvre* is an examination of this tension between sameness and difference in the relation between Turkish and European identities. On the one hand, there is a desire to mimic the West (accompanied by a sense of being belated with respect to European modernity); on the other hand, there is a persistent fear of becoming an inauthentic imitation of the West. The tension between this desire and fear is embodied by Sunay and Blue throughout *Snow*. Ironically, Pamuk has often been accused in Turkey for having sold out to a European audience through media saturation. Pamuk's controversial reception in Turkey proves to be an unfortunate enactment of some of the themes that lurk at the background of his novels, mainly the difficulty of being someone caught in the middle of the East-West debate and the fears triggered by aggressive nationalisms.

Part of the reason why Pamuk has been the target of such accusations is his background. Born in Istanbul in 1952, and raised in the wealthy and westernized district of Nişantaş, Pamuk

graduated from the American Robert College in Istanbul. After studying architecture at Istanbul Technical University for three years, and graduating in journalism from Istanbul University, Pamuk decided to become a novelist. Since 1982, when he published his first novel *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, Pamuk has written eight novels and won several prizes. While *Cevdet Bey* was the winner of both Orhan Kemal and Milliyet literary prizes, *The House of Silence*, published the same year, brought him the 1991 Prix de la Découverte Européenne. His following publications were *The White Castle* (1985), *The Black Book* (1990), which won the Prix France Culture, *The New Life* (1994), *My Name is Red* (1998), *Snow* (2002), which he refers to as his first and last political novel, an autobiographical work titled *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2003) and *Museum of Innocence* (2009). Pamuk received the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006 (orhanpamuk.net).

On the one hand, because he comes from a wealthy family and from the more Westernized city of Istanbul, Pamuk is seen as a member of the secular elite by the religious groups in Turkey who turn a blind eye to his observations; on the other hand, because of the ways in which he critiques the military, in his immediate surroundings, he is accused of taking sides with the religious groups. In this respect, Pamuk faces accusations from both sides. In return, he responds with a persistent double critique of both militant secularism and politicized Islam. Pamuk suggests that there is a broad range of choices available to us in re-constructing modern Turkish identity, and that we do not have to take sides and align ourselves with either one ideology or the other. As Azade Seyhan observes in “Seeing through the Snow,” Pamuk’s work “gives no credence to those who see him as a champion of modern Islam or who condemn him as an agent provocateur against the Kemalist reforms of the Republic.”

In his approach to the East-West tension, Pamuk to a certain extent follows the steps of an earlier Turkish novelist, essayist, and poet Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1960). Deeply

concerned with the difficulty of keeping up with the pace of the changing Ottoman-Turkish culture, Tanpınar's novels underline what he calls "*çift maksadlı yaşamak*" (to live with a dual purpose). Tanpınar uses Janus, the Roman God of beginnings and endings with two faces/heads, as a metaphor to explain the mental split of the modern Turkish civilization (Kılıç 326) in the transition from an Eastern-oriented culture to a Western-oriented one. While Pamuk is greatly influenced by Tanpınar, and draws on double-edged characters, he moves beyond oppositional dualisms, and instead points to the entanglement of the two faces of Janus.

One of Pamuk's goals is to challenge the either/or way of thinking. For example, in his first novel, *Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, Pamuk portrays three generations of a wealthy Istanbul family living in Nişantaş. This family saga is marked by the legacy of social, cultural and religious history, and Pamuk fully engages with the personal lives of his characters and their changing societies. The East-West question threads through the whole novel, which begins with the story of Cevdet Bey in 1905 and ends in the 1970s. Cevdet Bey is one of the few Muslim merchants living among Jews, Armenians, and Greeks in the Ottoman-Turkish society. While he makes a fortune, his brother and the members of his subsequent generations find themselves involved in more risky enterprises. Many conflicts surface among the family members and friends who think in drastically different ways about life, each overtaken by the desire to become *someone* by being *unlike another*. Cevdet Bey, for example, settles for an *alaturka* life focusing on family and merchandise, and has no interest in becoming actively involved in politics whereas his sick brother Nusret is preoccupied with *alafranga* thoughts of revolution. He hopes for a French Revolution to take place in Turkey, which he sees as the only necessary step in reaching an equal level of civilization with Europe. The gap between *alaturka* and *alafranga* ways of living articulated through the opposing characters of the two brothers points to a bigger conflict experienced by the generation witnessing the transition from Empire to Republic. The pressing

feeling that there are only two, very distinct, options to choose from is challenged by Fuat Bey, a friend of the brothers:

Your *either/or* way of thinking... I will teach you to be more flexible. According to you, there are simply two ways of thinking: you are either against an idea or embrace it completely. Never in between! Your brother is the same. He refuses... As far as I understand, he refuses to the extent that he has given up living... And you... All you care about is merchandise and family. The rest does not matter to you at all... This is not what life is about. There is always a third way. (My translation & emphasis, 46)

Fuat Bey criticizes the two brothers for being hard-headed and unable to see beyond their personal ambitions. Pamuk's novels are always a testimony to the possibility of finding a third way out of a conflict that repeats itself in a vicious cycle. This third way is not simply a synthesis of the existing discursive practices, but it is a necessity to acknowledge that sometimes it is *both and neither* rather than *either/or*. Pamuk offers a critique of single-minded polarizations, and draws our attention to the fact that under the domain of abstract notions such as culture, politics and religion lie overlapping fields of discourses, beliefs and ideologies, which co-exist, whether in peace or violence.

While questions concerning the social, cultural and political identity of modern Turkey constitute the core of Pamuk's novels, on a substantive level, one can always find a deeper involvement with the human search for wholeness. In the shadow of a past marked by westernizing interventions, Pamuk's works reveal the simultaneous desire and failure of recuperating a stable model of identification in the absence of a father figure. This father figure was embodied by the Sultan during the Ottoman Empire, and Mustafa Kemal in the young Republic. In Pamuk's novels, the lack of an authority figure—both on a political and authorial level—marks the absence of an originary identity. Pamuk's novels testify to the melancholy felt at the loss of the authentic moment, not simply due to having lost one's national identity to the cultural and economic centers of Western Europe, but also owing to the impossibility of

recovering an origin on an existential level. As one character in *The Black Book* remarks, “no-one can ever be himself in this land” (339).

Following the radical Westernization Turkey underwent in the early twentieth century, it has become more and more difficult for Turkish people to situate themselves in a distinct Eastern or Western identity. For European nations, Turkey continues to be a Middle-Eastern country whereas for several Middle Eastern nations influenced by Arabic culture, Turkey is considered to be part of the Western culture, bordering with Central Europe. Faced with Turkey’s ambiguous position, Pamuk poses the question of identity both on a national and an existential level. Indeed, the question of identity in its various disguises will be crucial throughout the three chapters of this dissertation. Where Özdamar and Derrida pose similar questions in transnational contexts, Pamuk focuses on Turkey and its relationship with Europe. Instead of providing the reader with simplistic models, such as the bridge metaphor, and rather than creating single-sided characters with firm standpoints, Pamuk invents double-edged characters who “buckle under the weight of their own illogic” (Seyhan, “Seeing”). Rather than treating each character and their ideology as absolute and inaccessible, he exposes the ambiguity of all ideological posturing, and the entanglements in between.

The reader is brought to witness the shift in the lives of several people who having once fought fiercely for one ideology had then converted to another ideology they had previously opposed. Among the characters, who change sides and embark upon new political quests later in their lives, there is Mahmut who “had joined the fundamentalist group of Hayrullah Efendi [and] now devoted himself to its internal wranglings with the same argumentative fury he had shown as a leftist, except that now his issue was who got to control the mosque,” (*Snow* 63) and Ferhat who “had joined the PKK and was now attacking various offices of Turkish Airlines with revolutionary fervor” (*Snow* 64). The reader also finds out over the course of events that some of

the Islamists in *Snow*, like İpek's former husband Muhtar, as well as some of the right-wingers, used to be Marxists. After Muhtar returns to Islam, as he had feared in his atheist years, he joins a religious political party and makes the following statement: "It was at this point that some devil within—half utilitarian, half rationalist, a remnant of my atheist days—began to goad me. People like me find peace only when fighting for a cause in a political party with the like-minded people" (*Snow* 62). This remark accentuates the empowerment that derives from membership in a group/fraternity. The will to power insistently and unconvincingly brings the characters to circumvent the left, the right, the religious, the atheist, the unfamiliar, the inconvenient, the economically deprived, the economically privileged, and so on. The list is long. In Kars, where everyone is connected to one another through love stories, secret political meetings, and revolutionary fervour, the ambition to have "proximity to real power," (*Snow* 212) as Ka admits, destroys all heroisms and subverts all calculations.

As Pamuk remarks in an interview, he had Dostoyevsky's *Devils* in mind when writing *Snow* (Hakan 78-99), and wanted to write a Dostoyevskian political novel.⁵ *Devils* is a story about a group of Russian intellectuals, atheists, socialists, and anarchists distributing subversive leaflets in an attempt to incite the proletariat to revolt against the government. They are destined to fail, because they lack general competence, organizational skills, a clear agenda, definite plans, and even uniform ideas; the only thing they have in common is that they don't like the way things are currently in Russia, and intend to change them, violently if necessary. It is no surprise that

⁵ Pamuk's entire *oeuvre* can be seen as an examination of the complex relationship between history, memory, and identity. Ironically, despite his sincere engagement with Turkey's political history, he is not considered a political writer in the same way that other leftist writer-journalists such as Çetin Altan or Yaşar Kemal are seen as political. This is mostly due to the fact that Pamuk neither channeled his literary talents into writing about the everyday realities in the Anatolian heartland (tales of political exploitation and economic deprivation coupled by romantic escapes into the nature), as is common in the tradition of the Turkish realist "village novel," nor joined forces with any one political movement. As he remarks in an interview with Feeney, Pamuk sees *Snow* as an anti-political political novel: "This isn't a political novel of the '30s or '40s, or socially committed, or with a political agenda. This is not propaganda... I'm not taking sides."

Pamuk had Dostoyevsky's novel in mind when writing *Snow* for he is highly influenced by modern European novelists with an existentialist bent, such as Musil and Kafka, whose stories are interwoven with men who desire, men who fail, men without qualities, and identities without men. Like these European authors, Pamuk writes in reaction to the *Bildungsroman*, the typical novel form of the nineteenth century, with a focus on the development and the sentimental education of the main character. By contrast to the figure of the hero in the *Bildungsroman*, Pamuk draws on characters whose lives become more ruled by accidents the more they want to exercise control. A number of tragi-comical events befall these primarily male characters, who take themselves too seriously.

Examples of the *Bildungsroman*, such as Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, typically concentrate on the teleological self-fulfillment of the subject. As Parla writes in "Roman ve Kimlik: *Beyaz Kale*," ("Novel and Identity: *The White Castle*") in the *Bildungsroman*, every step taken toward the future takes the subject towards the past; all outward movement returns to the circular self-enclosed subjectivity of the novel's hero who is well aware of the difference between right and wrong, true and false (Kılıç 85). In response to the heroes of the *Bildungsroman*, towards the end of the century, we find the rise of the *Doppelgänger* figure under the currents of romanticism, the split ego, the double, the Hegelian master-slave dialectic. The binaries enveloped by the split ego in early modernist novel turn, as Parla observes, into multiple masks and shadows in contemporary novels (Kılıç 87) such as Pamuk's *The White Castle*.⁶ *Snow* can be seen in continuity with these contemporary works, which move beyond the self/other dualism, and draws on characters who occupy multiple positions, often contradicting

⁶ *The White Castle* offers a malleable reading of the East-West binary in the context of an interchangeable master-slave relationship, which involves a young Italian captured by the Turkish fleet and brought to Istanbul, in the seventeenth century, where he becomes the slave of a Hoja (master in Arabic). The Hoja is convinced that the Italian youth's European education is superior to his own and becomes the young man's pupil. The dynamic relationship between the two characters is depicted through a postmodernist twist on the theme of the *doppelgänger*.

themselves. Faced with a simultaneous desire and failure to construct a firm identity, Pamuk's characters' ambiguity is evidenced by their multifarious nature.

Pamuk's goal in responding to the form of the *Bildungsroman* by breaking with the conscious and self-same ego model is partially to critique the over-empowered nature of the identity of the modern Turk constructed in Mustafa Kemal's *Speech. Snow* can be seen as written in reaction to the paternal ghosts evoked by *Speech*. Written by Mustafa Kemal and delivered to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey over six days, *Speech* covers the events leading up to the foundation of the Turkish Republic, and plays a nation-forming role. It functions both as Atatürk's testimony and *avant la lettre*, as it addresses following generations, who are assumed to be the products of his ideals. According to Adak, *Speech* "is a cyclical and repetitive account of a self with a prophet-like calling to rescue the nation" (517). Adak reads the authorial voice of *Speech* as "I-nation" and remarks that "this one-on-one correlation between the I-nation of *Nutuk* and the historical self of Kemal was imposed after *Nutuk*'s delivery. The 'book', 'man', and 'nation' trinity came to bear on logo-centric authority" (517). This "I" uttered by Mustafa Kemal represents the collective "I" of the future Turk. In *Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynaklari: Atatürk'ün Nutuk'u (The Official Records of the Political Culture in Turkey: Atatürk's Speech)*, Taha Parla offers an analysis of Kemal's authorial voice by studying excerpts from *Speech* and remarks that there is a prophetic tone in the way Mustafa Kemal addresses the nation. Structuring a collective identity, Kemal portrays himself as the hero, the charismatic leader who senses the potential for growth in the nation, and takes it upon himself to fulfill this potential by manipulating the society toward the direction he sees fit (30-1). As Parla asserts, Mustafa Kemal is both the prosecution and the judge; he makes a claim and creates the evidence to justify his assertion, holding the view that the whole world will one day appreciate his deeds as history unfolds (58).

Both a product and a critique of Mustafa Kemal's program, in counterdistinction to the self-enfolded organization of collective identity in *Speech*, *Snow* opens up a multi-dimensional space of dialogue: various voices engage with each other and challenge the authority of the writer's narratorial monologue. This multi-dimensional space of dialogue opened up by *Snow* makes it possible for the reader to accommodate different views, and hence creates an effect of detachment from the group identities that people in Turkey so strongly adhere to. A detachment from rigid identity models, subordinating East to West and vice versa, enables the reader to occupy simultaneous viewpoints as Pamuk loosens up the historic determinacy of the Turkish society, whose contours become all the more visible with the melting snow. Highlighting the notion that the question of self is a question of the relation to other rather than to a solipsist ego, Pamuk makes us think twice about binaries of inclusion/exclusion, self/other, by saving us momentarily from "sawing off the branch on which we are sitting" (Wittgenstein 23). It is through the acknowledgement of the tensions and entanglements—which reveal themselves in the novel—that we grow suspicious of the boundaries that typically tempt us to invent and circumvent an "other."

I will divide my discussion of *Snow* into two sections. In the first section, I will focus critical attention on genre, and the narrative structure based on several author-narrators. I will try to demonstrate how Pamuk writes a semi-autobiographical novel, which challenges the prerogatives of autobiography; in other words, he composes a novel that resembles the *Bildungsroman*, but navigates through the genre differently in order to illustrate "the dis-adjustment or incompleteness at the heart of all identity" (Dooley 142). A study of the authorial-narratorial entanglements in the first section will prepare the reader for an analysis of the political entanglements in the second section, where I will turn to a thematic overview of the novel and concentrate on the conflict between two important and mutually influential characters, Sunay and

Blue. I will study the relationship between these two characters to cast a sceptical eye on the way we understand dichotomies such as Islamic/modern, religious/secular, Eastern/Western, and I will propose a malleable reading of these categories, by focusing on the interlinking ideological endeavours.

2.2 The Law of Genre: Second-Hand Tales

When Pamuk set his mind to writing *Snow*, he envisioned what would be part love story and part political thriller featuring a poet visiting a remote town in eastern Turkey. As he notes in an interview with Hakan, Pamuk had a particular scene in mind before he started working on *Snow*. The scene was based on an encounter between two men in a prison cell. He imagined one man as having committed his whole life to political Islam, and the other to the secular order. They share certain affinities and an unusual friendship, as they become engaged in a debate about civilization (61). With such a framework in mind, Pamuk situates a similar story, based on several encounters among the members of different circles, in the city of Kars. The story takes place over the three days the protagonist Ka spends in Kars. A poet and journalist from Istanbul, Ka, after the initials of his name Kerim Alakuşoğlu, was exiled to Germany for publishing a political article in a time of tumult in Turkey. After returning from Frankfurt to Istanbul for his mother's funeral after 12 years of exile, he travels to Kars in an attempt to find the woman he once loved, İpek, and also to write a newspaper article for the Turkish newspaper "*Cumhuriyet*" ("Republic") on municipal elections and the epidemic of suicide among young girls, who are banned from attending school with headscarves. The story is mediated by the narrator, Orhan, who is a friend of Ka.

The fact that Pamuk had Dostoyevsky's *Devils* in mind while writing *Snow* is visible not only on a thematic level, but also on the level of the narrative, in the similarities between the carnivalesque poetics that Pamuk and Dostoyevsky employ. Different genres have different

means of accommodating the reader as well as the characters taking part in the story. Like Dostoyevsky, Pamuk makes use of a multi-layered narrative technique, which calls to mind Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque "use of inserted genres: novellas, letters, oratorical speeches... a mixing of prose and poetic speech" (*Dostoyevsky's* 118). As I stated in the introduction, Pamuk plays with the form of the *Bildungsroman*, but instead of creating a self-enclosed testimonial narrative, which returns to a stable identification model in a circular and teleological movement, he multiplies authorial signatures and confessionals. "Like most of Pamuk's previous novels, *Snow* is a metafiction, a text that reflects on the act of (re)constructing a story from fragments of other stories, evidentiary documents, eyewitness accounts, tapes, videos, notebooks and other traces of memory" (Seyhan, "Seeing"). The fact that the story is mediated through several voices, and is only partially complete with the help of scattered sources of information, raises doubt as to the truthfulness of the representation.

As Pamuk collects several testimonies without reaching a verdict, the reader is left to gather the remnants of incomplete information and second-hand tales to put together a clear picture of who Ka is. We must depend on the testimonies of people who have known Ka, and of the narrator who mediates Ka's feelings for the reader. Since we depend on testimonial accounts of others, even the most objective testimony runs the risk of reporting a lie. The question of finding a transparent, truthful, and accurate idiom through which to gain access to Ka's personality gains more importance as Pamuk mediates the story through three author-narrators: Ka the protagonist, Orhan the narrator, and Orhan Pamuk the real life author. My goal in the following section is to study the intricacies of the narrative structure to develop a sense of how it functions and what purpose it serves.

2.2.1 Tracing Ka's Footsteps

In the first few chapters of *Snow*, the reader is offered limited access to Ka's background.

Most of the information about his past is inserted into the novel in the form of brief flashbacks.

We know that he had been exiled for publishing an article he did not edit carefully, but no information is disclosed as to what the article is about, and this is of little importance. The focus is not so much on the article, but on the absurdity of the situation in which Ka found himself when he got into trouble.

In the small political newspapers of the late seventies, considerable freedom of expression had been exercised, much more than the penal code allowed... But after the military coup of 1980, the authorities slowly got around to tracking down everyone who'd earlier evaded prison simply by changing address, and it was at this moment that Ka, having been tried for a hastily printed political article he had not even written, fled to Germany. (35)

The fact that Ka spends 12 years in exile in Germany due to a misunderstanding does not only reveal the despotism of the 80s' Turkish state, but also a clumsiness on Ka's part since he is not even committed to the ideology represented in the article. At the beginning of the novel, then, we are introduced to a character whose life is guided by a series of absurd and unexpected events, which makes it challenging for the reader to trace continuity, or a causal set of relationships shaping Ka's life. Rather we find a series of fragmented anecdotes, which have the function of disorienting both him and the reader.

The reader senses a Kafkaesque absurdity due to both Ka's name's resemblance to Kafka's infamous "K," and the tragi-comic events that befall him as he pursues İpek, the university classmate for whom he still has romantic feelings. Right from the beginning, Ka's engagement with the political life in Kars is attributed to his lack of power, and the unfortunate mishaps giving shape to his life. Ka is typical of the anti-heroic characters we encounter in European novels produced in reaction to the *Bildungsroman*. Raised by secular parents, Ka's understanding of the conflict between secular and religious groups is opaque. He sees himself as a product of Western, secular education, but harbors curiosities about religious traditions that have been held back from him in his upbringing. On the one hand, Pamuk creates Ka's

personality following a line of European novelists, whose novels are taken over by alienated men who fail to make decisions. On the other hand, Ka breaks away from the stereotypical isolated male European protagonist whose cynicism leads him to permanent solitude. Ka differs from a character like Dostoyevsky's "man from the underground" or Kafka's "K" in that he embodies *hüzün*, a kind of sadness, as Pamuk writes in *Istanbul*, which is inherent to the Turkish culture as a whole. The word *hüzün* expresses a kind of melancholy felt nation-wide. According to Pamuk, *hüzün* derives from living among the ruins of a lost empire, in a divergent cultural heritage under the auspices of Western eyes. As depicted in Turkish literature, *hüzün* typically has had a social function; it places emphasis on the communal myths and discourses, which bind the society. In this respect, *Snow* shares affinities with the works of third-world writers such as Marquez who depict a sense of loneliness inherent to communities and nations rather than individuals.

In his interview with Hakan, Pamuk notes that Ka does not believe in politics, but he becomes entangled in the political problems in Kars solely as a consequence of his pursuit of the woman he loves, İpek. Ka is initially cynical about taking a political stand, but he gradually finds himself caught in the middle of the current political debates in Kars, and takes on the role of mediator. The negotiations he initiates between the secular and Islamic groups are nevertheless still just a means of getting together with İpek who is actively involved with the religious community. İpek is divorced from her husband Muhtar, the head of the local Islamist political party that is on the verge of winning the upcoming elections. As the reader gradually finds out, İpek and her sister Kadife are deeply implicated in the political crisis in Kars, through both romantic and ideological engagements.

Ka does not want to take on the role of the mediator, but he inescapably plays that role, because in his attempt to find reconciliation and order amidst the chaos, he oscillates between the two political groups surrounding Sunay and Blue. When he is with Blue, the underground

Kurdish-Islamist leader, he becomes labeled as one of the “mediators... [who are] just smart alecks who think they can stick their nose into your private business on the pretense of being impartial” (*Snow* 345). According to Blue, Ka’s desire to reconcile the conflicts between him and Sunay, former leftist activist recycled into a Kemalist theatre artist, illustrates that Ka lives in an illusory world, nourishing a “love of God [that] comes out of Western romantic novels” (*Snow* 354). While he is just an infuriating Western-loving romantic in Blue’s eyes, Ka takes on various labels and identities in the eyes of other characters. After a while, even Ka himself begins to resort to and take advantage of these different masks imposed on him in order to protect himself from becoming too involved with what happens around him.

For example, in Kars, Ka feels like a member of the bourgeoisie from Istanbul. That his background is different from that of the Kars locals becomes both an advantage and a disadvantage, depending on the conditions he finds himself in. Next to a German person in Frankfurt, Ka feels the same way that a local person from Kars feels next to him: humble and angry for remaining in the margins of a central culture. He constantly oscillates between two versions of himself: the Western-secular-atheist-cynical Ka, and the melancholic poet Ka who entertains the possibility of faith and identifies with the minority groups he encounters. “Reflective and poetic Ka confronts more questions at every turn; his tolerance and compassion paralyze him in his search for answers” (Seyhan, “Seeing”).

Ka’s self-image shifts particularly as he travels from one city to another. Pamuk juxtaposes cities/nations to cross the permeable boundaries between many Easts and Wests he traces within Turkey and Europe. During the border-crossings—Kars to Istanbul, Istanbul to Frankfurt, Kars to Frankfurt—each time Ka feels disconcerted with the space he dwells in, he holds on to something that will elevate his spirits, and detach him from the surrounding environment. At one instance, for example, Ka reflects on the years he spent in Frankfurt and

proudly announces that he had not made a single attempt to learn German, in order to preserve himself as a Turk in Germany: “My body rejected the language, so I was able to preserve my purity and my soul” (*Snow* 35). On a different note, when he is caught up in a hopeless situation in Kars, Ka distances himself from the surrounding community by concentrating on his dreams of going back to Frankfurt with İpek. His famous coat, purchased from a *Kaufhof* in Germany, becomes a symbol of his detachment from the problems in Kars. “This coat protects me from evil,” (*Snow* 237) says Ka when he refuses to take it off during his meeting with İpek’s sister Kadife. Indeed, the reader is introduced to this coat at the very first page of the novel along with the protagonist, as if the coat is part of Ka’s personality:

He was sitting next to the window and wearing a thick charcoal coat he’d bought at a Frankfurt *Kaufhof* five years earlier. We should note straight away that this soft, downy beauty of a coat would cause him shame and disquiet during the days he was to spend in Kars, while also furnishing a sense of security. (*Snow* 3)

The coat also becomes a means by which the people of Kars distinguish Ka from themselves. As Ka steps into the National Theatre to see a play staged by the Sunay Zaim Theatre Company, he notices a young man waving vigorously from the side aisle. This turns out to be a young religious boy named Necip, who approaches Ka and tells him that he recognized Ka just by his coat, then goes on asking questions about God, love and atheism.

Here an implicit reference can be traced to a Russian literary figure, Nikolai Gogol. Both Ka’s name and his repeatedly emphasized coat call to the reader’s mind Gogol’s short story “The Overcoat.” The protagonist of “The Overcoat” is a government clerk named Akakii Akakievich, who barely saves enough money to buy a new, luxurious coat. However, his new coat demands everyone’s attention, and he is soon attacked by thieves who steal his coat. To recover his lost possession, Akakievich asks for help from an Important Person, the director of a department with the rank of general. He treats Akakievich harshly and soon after Akakievich dies. One night when

the Important Person is returning home, he is attacked by a ghost, the late Akakii, who steals his overcoat. The stealing of outer garments continues, even though now the ghost is a big man with a moustache and enormous fists. This possible reference to the overcoat worn by Gogol's protagonist calls for an interesting cross-reading as Ka's luxurious coat becomes a symbol of everything that distinguishes him from the locals in Kars. As soon as he arrives in Kars, all eyes are on Ka, including those of the secret service and the Islamic fundamentalists. The coat becomes a body of associations and assumptions made about him: Western, atheist, ambassador to the West (252), poet-journalist, bourgeoisie... In the end, too much attention is paid to this coat, which becomes the cause of Ka's death.

The name Akakii in Gogol's story also sounds strikingly similar to the word "obkakat" in Russian, or *kaka*, which means "defecator." *Kaka* has the same meaning in Turkish and German. Pamuk may have purposefully planned for Ka's name to echo this word, because Ka is depicted as a rather weak character, whose life is guided by accidents. Ka's death also hints at the possible interpretations of his name. Before he leaves Kars, it often occurs to Ka that he may be getting himself into trouble by meeting with the leaders of all the radical groups. In the chapter titled "A Godless Man in Kars," an article is published in the local newspaper which turns Ka into a "godless imitation-European" who vainly attempts to "stick his tongue at our country and even at the great Atatürk" (*Snow* 319). Upon reading this article, Ka has a flight of imagination:

Early in his youth, Ka firmly believed that there could be no higher honor than to die for an intellectual political cause or for what he had written. By his thirties, he'd seen too many of his friends and classmates tortured for the sake of foolish, even malign principles... On the corner of Halitpaşa and Kazım Karabekir avenues, Ka saw a pipe protruding from an icy hole in a windowless wall, imagined it was the barrel of a gun aimed straight at him, and in his mind's eye saw himself dying on the snow-covered pavement. What would they say about him in the Istanbul papers?... Had there really been a German journalist called Hans Hansen, and had Ka really been his friend, the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, might have run a story about his murder... Ka took some consolation in imagining that his poems might be translated into German and published in *Akzent* magazine, but it was still perfectly clear to him that should this article in the Border City Gazette prove to be the death of him, the

published translations would mean nothing. (320-324)

In the Turkish version of *Snow*, the last sentence includes a vulgar Turkish expression, “bok yoluna gitmek,” which means “to die for shitty reasons/to die in vain.” This expression further contributes to the understanding of a series of accidental and absurd events that give shape to Ka’s and other characters’ lives. As he fears, Ka will be murdered by a suspected religious group upon his return to Frankfurt, yet, while alive, this fear does not keep him from participating in dangerous meetings with both Kemalist and religious groups.

Ka’s involvement with the religious circle in Kars invokes in him the desire to reconcile the secular, at times cynic *Avrupai Istanbulu* (Europeanized local of Istanbul) Ka with the romantic and faithful Ka, who wants to blend in with the others in Kars. As he participates in the political rituals of the communities in Kars, he does not solely embody the tension among these groups by playing the role of the negotiator, but is also challenged to become someone who can accommodate all the perspectives available to him. More often than not he mutters his desire to remain equally sympathetic of the secular West and the faithful East. As the young man Necip puts his palm on Ka’s forehead and recites what Ka must have been thinking twenty years ago, Ka quietly listens and confirms that Necip’s predictions are accurate:

On a winter day, when you were a lycee student, it was snowing, and you were lost in thought. You could hear God inside you, and you were trying to forget him. You could see that the world was one, but you thought that if you could close your eyes to this vision, you could be more unhappy and also more intelligent. And you were right. Only people who are very intelligent and very unhappy can write good poems. So you heroically undertook to endure the pains of faithlessness, just to be able to write good poems. But you didn’t realize then that when you lost that voice inside you, you’d end up all alone in an empty universe. (*Snow* 144-5)

Having closed his eyes to the above mentioned “mysterious” vision in his youth, Ka grows increasingly interested in seeking harmony and faith in nature in his new life in Kars. For him, snow becomes a manifestation of Allah’s presence: “The snow reminded me of God... The snow

reminded me of the beauty and mystery of creation, of the essential joy, that is life” (*Snow* 103).

Ka’s affection for nature and poetry are captivated by “the sound of his muse”:

For a moment they all looked outside to watch the snow falling onto the empty tracks. What am I doing in this world? Ka asked himself. How miserable these snowflakes look from this perspective, how miserable my life is. A man lives his life, and then he falls apart and soon there is nothing left. Ka felt as if half his soul had just abandoned him but still the other half remained; he still had love in him. Like a snowflake, he would fall as he was meant to fall... His father has a certain smell after shaving, and now this smell came back to him. He thought of his mother making breakfast, her feet aching inside her slippers on the cold kitchen floor... as he gave his mind over to all the other little things that make up a life and realized how they all added up to a unified whole, he saw a snowflake... So it was that Ka heard the call from deep inside him: the call he heard only at moments of inspiration, the only sound that could ever make him happy, the sound of his muse. For the first time in four years, a poem was coming to him... even as it waited in its hiding place, it radiated the power and beauty of destiny. (*Snow* 92-3)

His interest in the particularities of life turns Ka into the figure of an anthropologist. He travels to Kars and offers the reader a panoramic view of the surrounding environment. There is a statement underlying Ka’s travels; he does not simply sit by his desk and type these characters, but travels all the way to this marginal city in Turkey, speaks to all kinds of people, and takes notes like a journalist. The problem of presentation is a big question here in contradistinction to *Speech* written by Mustafa Kemal on behalf of the “general will.” Ka exhibits a turn away from the idealistic systems of the early Turkish republicans to contemporary reality. He believes in a hidden order, which he hopes to unfold through his travels and research, and by being hospitable to the pluralism and diversity in Kars. His assembling of the fine details of events, conversations, and concealed signs contributes to the completion of his project. However, he also retains a certain authorial figure under the guise of the journalist/writer/anthropologist in search for symmetry, even if this is to be found ironically in asymmetry. In his attempt to keep a critical distance from both the paternalism of state nationalism and the authoritarianism of political Islam, Ka encounters a different challenge at every turn. His search for an understanding that would help him resolve his dilemmas at the face of his interactions with diverse communities

leads him to close observation and reflection. Like an encyclopedic world-traveler, he carefully gathers pieces of information which he tries to put together. Nature and poetry are his tools for dismantling the prevailing anxiety.

As he puts it, Ka perceives himself as a protagonist fallen from “magnificent nineteenth-century novels, English romantic poetry... Turgenev’s novels,” (*Snow* 36) which he loves to read. Seen from his perspective, Ka plays the leading role in the story that he constructs, which shares several attributes with nineteenth century novels and the *Bildungsroman*. He wants to be a romantic hero from a Turgenev novel, but fails to fulfill this desire. In his work titled *The German Bildungsroman*, Todd Kontje gives an etymological explanation of the term *Bildungsroman*: “The German word *Bildung* originally referred to both the external form or appearance of an individual (*Gestalt*, Latin *forma*) and to the process of giving form (*Gestaltung*, *formatio*)” (1). Kontje explains that the concept of *Bildung* changed significantly during the eighteenth century when “[o]rganic imagery of natural growth replace[d] a model of divine intervention. Transformation into the perfect unity of God turn[ed] into the development of one’s unique self” (2). This transition from divine intervention to natural growth as part of one’s formation is particularly relevant in understanding Ka, who reflects on then unity of God and nature to resolve his inner conflicts.

Ka never admits believing in God, but he always grapples with the question of faith. God is a prevailing force in his life, even when He is experienced as a lack. As Ka questions his own stand in religious matters, he finds comfort in the fact that God’s presence manifests itself in the harmony and poise of nature, which triggers the creative forces in him and inspires him after a long time to write poetry. Snow, as a natural phenomenon covering the whole city of Kars and bringing a kind of unity to the chaos, becomes a divinized and romanticized element for Ka, who takes the geometrical and symmetrical form of a snowflake and uses it as a narrative scheme to

sketch out his own thoughts. In other words, he seeks a kind of harmony that he believes God may have communicated through simple shapes found in nature. Moreover he believes that if he makes sense of this “hidden symmetry,” he can then discover harmony amongst his own troubles as well. He finds several old volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Life*, and quickly flips to the following entry:

SNOW. The solid form taken by water when falling, crossing, or rising through the atmosphere. Each crystal snowflake forms its own unique hexagon. Since ancient times, mankind has been awed and mystified by the secrets of snow. In 1555, a priest named Olaus Magnus in Uppsala, Sweden, discovered that each snowflake, as indicated in the diagram, has six corners... (*Snow* 231)

From then on, Ka begins to organize his thoughts around the hexagon shape of a snowflake. By the end of the novel, he comes up with a figure, which consists of three intersecting poles. The six corners of the snowflake are plotted in such a way that each corner represents a concept such as “Imagination,” “Reason” and “Memory.” On each pole, we find the titles of the nineteen poems that Ka composes during his stay in Kars. These titles reveal conflicting ideologies and emotions such as “Hidden Symmetry” and “The Place where God does not Exist.” The centre/axis of the figure is named after a poem titled “I, Ka.” The diagram brings together otherwise irreconcilable notions for Ka. While each poem has a particular motif, together they make up a “mysterious whole,” as the narrator Orhan points out in the following passage:

In his last letter from Frankfurt, Ka had happily announced that after four years of hard work he had finally completed a new book of poetry. The title was *Snow*. Most of the poems were based on childhood memories that had come to him in flashes during his visit to Kars, and he carefully recorded these inspirations in a green notebook. In an earlier letter written almost immediately upon leaving Kars, he had told me he had come to believe that the emerging book had a “deep and mysterious” underlying structure; he had spent his last four years in Frankfurt filling in the blanks in this hidden design... abstaining from [the world’s] pleasure like a dervish... he would have a manuscript typed up and duplicated once he was sure everything was in its rightful place. (*Snow* 278-9)

However, this deep and mysterious design never really emerges. The secret outlives Ka, as a complete manuscript of poems never finds its way to the publishers or Ka’s friend Orhan, the

narrator. In other words, everything does not fall into its rightful place as expected. This secret, on which everything seems to depend, does not reveal itself. The drifting of a final, absolute meaning calls to mind the secret that we will come in Derrida's work. Derrida does not conceptualize the secret as a reserve of knowing, but perceives it as a deferred and empty signifier, which makes possible an opening towards the future.

It is the impossibility to bring closure to this inexhaustable opening conditioned by the secret that enables Ka to accept his two-facedness, by letting "the Westerner in him discompose," as Orhan Pamuk suggests by referencing the excerpt from Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* at the beginning of the novel. When Ka pays a visit to the sheikh in Kars, he reflects this concern with wanting to be accepted as both Westerner and Easterner.

"I grew up in Istanbul, in Nişantaş, among society people. I wanted to be like the Europeans. I couldn't see how I could reconcile my becoming a European with a God who required women to wrap themselves in scarves, so I kept religion out of my life. But when I went to Europe, I realized there could be an Allah who was different from the Allah of the bearded provincial reactionaries." "Do they have a different God in Europe?" asked the sheikh jokingly... [Ka:] "I want to believe in the God you believe in and be like you, but because there's a Westerner inside me, my mind is confused." (*Snow* 104-105)

Ka composes the poem titled "Hidden Symmetry" in a moment when he becomes close to recognizing a divine design in the making of the world, and feels that his poem, like the world itself, is not his creation. He never admits at any point that he has found God, but he uses such moments of poetic inspiration and "divine signs" to challenge the single-mindedness of the "Westerner" in him. As he places the poem titled "Hidden Symmetry" on the Reason section of his snow diagram, the juxtaposition of the notions of hidden symmetry and reason brings the reader, in an elliptical line, back to Pamuk's own clandestine statement on the double-edged nature of people. The excerpt from Robert Browning's "Bishop Blougram's Apology," which Pamuk inserts at the beginning of *Snow*, reveals the double-edged quality sustained in the lives of Pamuk's characters: "Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things / The honest thief, the tender

murderer / The superstitious atheist.” Like a snowflake, which has six faces and still possesses a shape that is harmonious and symmetrical, Ka wants to find a way of accepting his conflicted identity, by restoring some kind of stability.

Pamuk’s goal in reflecting on Ka’s inner tensions is to question the relationship between antagonistic concepts such as reason and faith, whose juxtaposition, as a result of European modernity has given rise to another dichotomy of the kind, secularism vs. Islam. As Chérif remarks in *Islam and the West*, “modernity encourages the primacy of reason... [and] this is a positive thing... [but] there are fewer and fewer connections between the concept of the modern citizen and the horizon toward which monotheistic peoples in general, and Muslims in particular, are reaching” (48).⁷ Pamuk reflects on a similar issue by drawing on Ka’s dualism. Instead of depicting religion as an antidote to reason, he asks: is reason only present in the absence of faith, as modern scienticism would have us believe, or do “religion and reason develop in tandem,” (“Faith and Knowledge” 28) as Derrida asks, Janus-faced like a double-sided mirror? Ka feels “two-faced” (196) for wanting to be both provincial and urban, at once modern/secular and faithful. The conflict he embodies recalls Tanpinar’s use of Janus as a metaphor to explain the East-West entanglement in modern Turkey.

In a way, Ka mirrors the secular-religious tension between Sunay and Blue, bearing witness to the possibility of occupying a space where these binaries do not function anymore. Ka slides in and out of various political stands, and at times embodies the dialogic engagement of several voices. In an interview with Jörg Lau, Pamuk says the following: “My book has many

⁷ Chérif’s discussion of secularism centers on the tensions between French laicism and the Arabo-Muslim culture of Algeria. He proposes that secularism calls for its own transformation: “the democracy to come... assumes secularism, that is, both the detachment of the political from the theocratic and the theological, thus entailing a certain secularism of the political, while at the same time, encompassing freedom of worship in a completely consistent, coherent way, and absolute religious freedom guaranteed by the State” (50). Chérif’s observation is relevant in the context of Turkey as well since Turkish laicism takes French *laïcisme* as a model.

voices, and I do not comment on them individually. Dostoyevsky was the master of this form of writing... The challenge is to also make the voices representing opinions I find repugnant sound convincing.” By that account, the snow schema Ka comes up with accommodates multiple perspectives, and demonstrates that Ka can simultaneously participate in a number of positions and belief systems without belonging to any one of these categories. The multi-dimensional and asymmetrical design Ka invents to express the undecideability of his own position in Kars resembles a double-edged sword. On one edge, we find Ka’s desire to write a *Bildungsroman*, by being a romantic hero, whose actions can be understood as an allegory of heroic nation-building; on the other edge, we find Ka’s failure to fulfill his desire, which results in the creation of a (post)modern anti-hero, who fails to build a self-same identity, and ends up becoming an allegory of a disoriented nation-state. The book Ka intends to write is a book of poems, a book of nature, a book of life, conceptually a *Bildungsroman*. But the reasonable closure he hopes to bring to his spiritual journey as a writer is interrupted as the book falls wide open in front of him, symbolic of his “unfinalized consciousness” (Bakhtin, *Dostoyevsky’s* 176).

The simultaneous attempt and failure to recover a self-symmetrical identity is a playful concept that I will explore throughout this dissertation. Derrida will refer to it as a “double interdiction” whereas Özdamar will multiply the masks to invoke the multi-referential aspect of migration and transnational living. Pamuk creates double-edged characters who support Bakhtin’s remark that “everything in his world lives on the very border of its opposite... Faith lives on the very border of atheism, sees itself there and understands it” (*Dostoyevsky’s* 176). The entanglement of the seemingly opposite characteristics reveals the entanglement of the different communities we tend to see as segregated from one another. As Ka’s snow scheme brings faith and reason, atheism and divine harmony together, it also mirrors the Kars/Turkish community in its diversity. Ka collects evidence from each and everyone he meets to represent different

subjectivities. Instead of “the sphere of a single and unified monologic consciousness, a unified and indivisible spirit unfolding within itself,” (Bakhtin, *Dostoyevsky’s* 177) he embodies an “authentic polyphony,” (*Dostoyevsky’s* 178) overcoming “ethical solipsism” (*Dostoyevsky’s* 177).

In “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” Fredric Jameson remarks that “all third-world texts are necessarily... *national allegories... the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*” (Irzik, “Allegorical” 554). If we accept Jameson’s observation with some modifications, and note that some “third-world” literary texts such as *Snow* can be read as national allegories, we can argue that Ka’s Janus-faced character allegorizes the accumulated tension between Sunay’s and Blue’s circles over decades. Pamuk invokes the carnivalesque entanglement among the different communities within the Turkish nation on many levels: first in Ka’s dualism, then in the ambiguous relationship between Ka and Orhan, and finally in the violent engagement of Sunay and Blue. I will dwell on each of these layers in order to draw a fuller picture of the intersubjective model of collectivity that Pamuk invokes for the reader.

2.2.2 From Ka to Orhan to Orhan Pamuk

From the beginning of *Snow*, the reader is aware of the presence of a narrator who is editing Ka’s notes together with the information he gathers from the people in Kars. However, for the most part, the narrator remains partially invisible until the last few chapters when the reader is occupied absorbing the events befalling Ka. After the recounting of Ka’s death, in the chapter titled “No One Here Likes Ka these Days,” near the end of *Snow*, the narrator’s (Orhan’s) voice becomes stronger as he assumes a first person narrative. Ka becomes gradually replaced by Orhan who now wanders in the streets of Kars, meeting İpek and Fazıl where Ka had met them before.

Orhan's visit to Kars four years after Ka's journey provides him with a narrative framework left incomplete by Ka. Orhan arrives in Kars with the hope of filling in the blanks of the story of his dead friend, and reconstructing the genesis of the lost poems by finding the recording of Ka's reading of one of his poems in the local TV archives. He ends up retracing Ka's steps, and visiting the scenes of the events. Ka's missing book of poetry titled *Snow* becomes the *raison d'être* of Orhan's novel with the same title. In this respect, *Snow* can be said to have a double narrative and two separate endings.

The first story pertains to Ka's journey and ends with his murder; the second story begins with Orhan's narration of Ka's adventures and ends with Orhan's visit to Kars, after which he leaves the reader with the tentative promise that a book may be written about all that befell Ka and Orhan in this city. The narrator completes his story by hinting at the possibility that he may compose a novel, by which time the reader has already finished reading this book titled *Snow* by Orhan Pamuk. Orhan's aspiration to complete his novel provides Ka with a posthumous redemption. As we find ourselves retracing Ka's steps, in more or less reverse order, we realize that we are in a palindrome. In the end, Orhan does not manage to reconcile the conflicts arising among the Kars community anymore than Ka does. However, there is a textual completion which outlives its protagonist. While Orhan completes the process of writing a book about the people of Kars, Ka leaves his own story unfinished as a character. The narrator is exhilarated by the possibility of editing, correcting and completing Ka's story, but when he flips through the pages of letters Ka has written to İpek from Frankfurt, he feels heart-wrenched and questions his own ability to really understand Ka.

Here, perhaps, we have arrived at the heart of our story. How much can we ever know about the love and pain in another's heart? How much can we hope to understand those who have suffered deeper anguish, greater deprivation, and more crushing disappointments than we ourselves have known? Even if the world's rich and powerful were to put themselves in the shoes of the rest, how much would they really understand the wretched

millions suffering around them? So it is when Orhan the novelist peers into the dark corners of his poet friend's difficult and painful life: How much can he really see? (281)

This passage demonstrates the sense of responsibility Orhan feels toward Ka and raises suspicion about representation and accurate testimony. Orhan's only means of accessing Ka's personal history is through interviews, written documents and archives. Additionally, he is putting together a book about Ka, and assumes an authorial position while at the same time realizing that his own writing is nothing but a testimony, whose evidence is other testimonies. As the narrator's writing cannot escape a partial tone, neither Orhan nor the reader is aware of where Ka's biography (penned by Orhan) ends, and Orhan's autobiography begins. In fact, as he wanders the streets of Kars looking for multifarious traces of Ka, Orhan makes the following observation: "That morning, as I walked the streets of Kars, talking to the same people Ka had talked to, sitting in the same teahouses, there had been many moments when I almost felt I *was* Ka" (446). He becomes so deeply involved with Ka's story that he even finds himself "[babbling] a bit of nonsense [about his love for İpek] that amused İpek enough to make her smile" (456). As Orhan's and Ka's personalities begin to emerge, the reader is drawn into a narrative, where the authority of a single author is dismantled and the two friends' personalities are entangled.

In a conversation, which takes place between Orhan and Fazıl (a young religious boy and a local of Kars), we find further commentary from Orhan Pamuk with regard to the limitations of representation. Orhan asks Fazıl what he would like the reader to be told if he were to write a novel that takes place in Kars. Fazıl says "nothing" at first, but then he adds: "I did think of something, but you may not like it... If you write a book set in Kars and put me in it, I'd like to tell your readers not to believe anything you say about me or anything you say about any of us. No one could understand us from so far away" (462). Orhan responds to Fazıl:

"But no one believes in that way what he reads in a novel," I said. "Oh yes, they do," he cried. "If only to see themselves as wise and superior and humanistic, they need to think of

us as sweet and funny, and convince themselves that they sympathize with the way we are and even love us. But if you would put in what I've just said, at least your readers will keep a little room for doubt in their minds." (462-3)

This final remark calls into question both Orhan's and Orhan Pamuk's roles as authors. This is only one of the several clues in the final pages of the novel, wherein the authorship of the writer/observer is called into question. These metafictional commentaries encourage the reader to trace certain affinities between Orhan the narrator and Orhan Pamuk the real-life author. For example, the narrator is also a writer named Orhan, and he refers to his previous novel titled *The Black Book*, which is a novel by Orhan Pamuk, and to his daughter Rūya, which is the name of Orhan Pamuk's daughter.

When we read Pamuk's interview with Hakan, where he recounts the writing process of *Snow*, the cross-references between Orhan and Orhan Pamuk become even more intriguing. Pamuk informs us that he did in fact travel to Kars using the same ruse as his poet character to undertake research, and many of the details in the book reflect his own experiences in Kars, including his being picked up by the local police who were suspicious of his visit. Thus, Fazıl's statement to Orhan in the final pages of *Snow* can also be read as an ironic auto-correction made by Pamuk at the end of his novel. After speaking of matters sensitive to everyone in Turkey, Pamuk speaks through his characters to articulate the impossibility of achieving a God-like objective viewpoint. Through his appeal to a character like Orhan, who resembles him in many respects, Pamuk leaves his signature on the text to suggest that even the real life author cannot clearly draw the boundaries between truth and lie.

The narrative framework Pamuk constructs consists of autobiographical and biographical strands. On one level, the reader captures certain instances from Ka's life, but gains access to those anecdotes through a pile of evidentiary documents, eyewitness accounts and other traces of memory organized together by the narrator Orhan. On another level, Pamuk inserts

autobiographical threads from his life by constructing a character like Orhan. The story is therefore mediated and signed by three subjects whose testimonies are entangled, interchangeable, and continuously interrupting and overriding one another. This emphasis on the ambiguity of testimony makes it challenging for the reader to identify with any one character. Thus, like many characters, we fail to accommodate ourselves comfortably in this text, always encountering our own desire and failure to gain autonomy.

Additionally, the relationship that Orhan develops toward his friend Ka after Ka dies, through the scattered notes and testimonials he gathers in Kars, throws light on how the personalities and the viewpoints of the two begin to meld into one another. As Orhan gradually finds it difficult to separate himself from Ka, and as the borders between self and other become undecipherable, we witness an intimacy that stands in stark contrast to the relationship between Blue and Sunay. As I will discuss in the following section, Sunay and Blue try to erect rigid boundaries between their ideals and social circles to resist the intersubjective dynamic, which brings them together. Ka and Orhan's friendship on the one hand, and Sunay and Blue's animosity on the other hand, run as two parallel stories in the novel.

Pamuk creates two divergent forms of interaction, where we attest to two kinds of entanglement, positive and negative. What bond there is between Ka and Orhan is due to their friendship as much as it is due to the intimacy that derives from Orhan's imagination and will to understand Ka's condition prior to his death. The entanglement between Sunay and Blue, however, has a negative tone as the two are frequently violent toward one another. As I stated in my introduction, I contend that entanglement displays both positive and negative tendencies, and provides a matrix for both justice and injustice. Pamuk calls attention to both tendencies to envision a kind of collectivity, which is defined neither by assimilation nor exclusion. Intersubjectivity simultaneously invites love and violence; it gives shape to a space of relation,

where self and other are no longer defined in terms of oppositional couples, or in terms of the canonical models of friendship/fraternity and enmity. Pamuk destabilizes these pre-given rules lending shape to the way we communicate with one another. He underlines the urgency for thinking of a new form of interaction that needs to be negotiated at every instant with all the risks involved.

2.3 Memory and Its Discontents

2.3.1 Prescribed Identities: Chronicle of a Coup Foretold

My focus in this section will be on two particular characters, Sunay and Blue, who embody the tension between Kemalist-secular groups and the religious groups and minorities in Turkey. A look at the tension between the two figures and their respective circles is crucial in understanding the two kinds of nationalisms at work: Sunay's nationalism takes the "West," specifically France, as a model; Blue's nationalism takes as its basis an anti-Western perspective. Whether Westernism or anti-Westernism lies at the heart of either ideology, they both reveal the important role the imagined "West" plays in defining the different aspects of Turkish identity and the self-colonial dynamic within the nation. Seen from this perspective, the interaction between Sunay and Blue is highly relevant in understanding the East-West entanglement.

Sunay, the actor and head of the Sunay Zaim Theatrical Company on tour in Kars, openly admires Western ideas for the sake of national progress. On tour with his theatre company, Sunay serves as a parody of the hyper-modern ideals of the early Turkish republicans. He sees himself as an intellectual and a natural leader who has a calling to enlighten the ignorant public of Turkey's marginalized cities and small towns. Pamuk refers to Sunay as a Jacobin throughout the text in reference to the admiration for the French Revolution among Turkish republicans. As Reşat Kasaba writes in "Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities," "it was in the French Revolution that the Ottoman and republican reformers found their most direct source of

inspiration... There were many similarities between the Ottoman-Turkish reformers and the Jacobins who dominated the French state between 1793 and 1794, in terms of remaking their society” (Bozdoğan 24). As Kasaba furthermore illustrates in his article,

[t]he second constituent element of the modern approach to Ottoman and Turkish reform derived from a peculiar inversion of Enlightenment thought that took place not in Turkey but in Europe. Originally, the European philosophers who are identified with the Enlightenment did not think of “human progress” as the preserve of any one culture, people, or geographical place but as something attainable by all of humanity, so long as people learned not to put obstacles in front of it. By the end of the nineteenth century... in the hands of frustrated political leaders and the intelligentsia, this unifying ideal was transformed into its opposite... Now certain cultures were judged to be unsuitable to take part in progress unless they abandoned their identity. (26-7)

In connection with this practice, the earlier ideology of the state was founded on a Rousseauist-Jacobin conception of the general will. The leading intellectuals of the republican period took it upon themselves to judge which cultures or cultural norms would be suitable to participate in the progress.

The fundamental difference between the French Revolution and the Turkish Reformation was that the reforms carried out during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic were not a revolution of the people. As Şerif Mardin notes in “Projects as Methodology: Some Thoughts on Modern Turkish Social Science,” the task which Mustafa Kemal gave the republican elite

could be seen as the perpetuation of a tendency to conceptualize social change as promoted by *projects*, that is, plans for change originating among a cohesive group of social “engineers...” The reform movement had no identifiable philosophical foundation. Its Jacobinism, possibly its deepest root, was pragmatic and practical... The republic took over educational institutions and cultural practices from the West without realizing that these were just the tip of an iceberg of meanings, perceptions, and ontological positions. (Bozdoğan 65)

“The underlying assumption [...was] that once the environment was altered, the behavior of individuals could be easily molded and made to fit the requirements of the newly created circumstances” (Kasaba 24). As an inheritor of these hypermodern ideals, Sunay wants to

contribute to the republican program by way of theater; for him politics is indiscernible from art.

Sunay is deeply inspired by the French Jacobins and often finds himself giving speeches on “the glories of the French revolution” (*Snow* 425). Having persuaded himself to believe that he can conceptualize social change on and beyond the stage, he employs quotes from Hegel on history giving roles to certain people, and poses with volumes of Atatürk’s *Speech* to prove that he had been playing revolutionaries for years. “Turkish audiences had no doubt that the handsome, majestic, confidence-inspiring Sunay would make an excellent Atatürk” (*Snow* 204). Pamuk parodies Sunay on many occasions, particularly by drawing attention to his desire to predict and dictate future events before they happen. During the preparations of the second play his company is about to stage, Sunay visits the local newspaper, *Border City Gazette* (*Serhat Şehir Gazetesi*), to prescribe the news he wants to have published the day following the performance. Sunay announces beforehand the heroic death that he will bring upon himself on stage during the performance titled *Tragedy in Kars*, which is an adaptation of Thomas Kydd’s *Spanish Tragedy* that pays homage to the French Jacobin and the English Jacobean drama. While sipping a glass of *rakı*, a typical Turkish liquor, Sunay completes the following article to be printed in the paper:

DEATH ON STAGE. ILLUSTRIOUS ACTOR SUNAY ZAIM SHOT DEAD DURING YESTERDAY’S PERFORMANCE... The death of the great Turkish actor Sunay Zaim was for the audience more shattering than life itself. Although the people of Kars were fully aware that the play was about a person liberating herself from tradition and religious oppression, they were still unable to accept that Sunay Zaim was really dying... [they] will never forget that he sacrificed his life for Art. (364-5)

We find out towards the end of the novel that Sunay does indeed die on stage as he states in the article. This is only one of the few instances in the novel when the reader is made to witness certain characters’ ambition to regulate the future events in Kars. A similar scene takes place when, shortly after his arrival to Kars, Ka visits the local newspaper. Serdar Bey, the owner of the

gazette, hands Ka the article that will appear in the following day's newspaper.

“Night of Triumph for the Sunay Zaim Players at the National Theatre”

The Sunay Zaim Theatrical Company, which is known throughout Turkey for its theatrical tributes to Atatürk, the republic and the Enlightenment, performed to a rapt and enthusiastic audience at the National Theatre yesterday evening... The show... [included] republican vignettes, the most beautiful scenes from the most important artistic works of the Western Enlightenment, theatrical sketches criticizing advertisements that aim to corrode our culture, the adventures of Vural, the celebrated goalkeeper, and poems in praise of Atatürk and the nation. Ka, the celebrated poet, who is now visiting our city, recited his last poem, entitled “Snow”. The crowning event of the evening was a performance of *My Fatherland or My Scarf*, the Enlightenment masterwork from the early years of the republic, in a new interpretation entitled *My Fatherland or My Headscarf*. (30)

Ka becomes dazzled by the content of the article:

[Ka:] “I don't have a poem called ‘Snow’, and I'm not going to the theatre this evening. Your newspaper will look like it's made a mistake.” [Serdar:] “Don't be sure so sure. There are those who despise us for writing the news before it happens; they fear us not because we are journalists but because we can predict the future. You should see how amazed they are when things turn out exactly as we've written them. And quite a few things do happen only because we've written them up first. This is what modern journalism is all about. I know you won't want to stand in the way of our being modern—you don't break our hearts—and that is why I am sure you will write a poem called ‘Snow’, and then come to the theatre to read it.” (31)

Indeed, as the story unfolds, the reader finds that Ka does write a poem titled “Snow” and he does attend the National Theatre to read it in public. On the one hand, the local newspaper's claim to modern journalism and foretelling of events is reminiscent of the sense of inevitability in the third world literary works, particularly of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novels. In Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, for example, we encounter the story of Santiago Nasar, who—as we know right from the beginning of the story—will be murdered for having dishonoured a young girl in a South American village. After the brothers of the girl decide to kill the man responsible, they publicly declare their intention. What is interesting is that no one will try to stop the brothers from committing this murder. The story is mediated by a narrator who relates it thirty years after the murder takes place, in the order of the events leading up to the murder, trying to make sense of it by conducting interviews with witnesses and searching through archives. *Snow* is

reminiscent of this story partly because of the sense of inevitability and anticipation of future events, but also in the way both narratives are structured.

Here too we have a narrator who travels to Kars years after Ka is murdered, trying to understand the incidents leading up to his death. Several events are publicly declared in or dictated to the public through the local newspaper, yet nothing stops these foretold events from happening. In fact, Ka's murder is often hinted at by Blue, and Muhtar who openly warns him: "If I were you, I wouldn't be wandering the streets so casually" (318). Additionally, the modern journalists' ability to predict the future in *Snow* can be understood as a projection of the collective memory shaped by the repetitive patterns in modern Turkish history, whereby an almost intuitive anticipation of future events manipulates the story line: the tension between religious and secular groups increases, innocent people are murdered, the military interferes, and violence fuels animosities on both sides. The representation of this recurring motif in Pamuk's novel is a critique targeting both the groups who want to politicize Islam, and the Jacobins who support a militant democracy. *Snow* depicts how these two parties feed off of each other, inexhaustibly bringing constraints to Turkish democracy.

The necessity to dictate future events before they happen and to naturalize personal schemes by disguising them in the illusion of immediacy resembles the making of a prescribed national identity, which early Turkish republicans dictated to the public. Pamuk depicts the modern journalist and Sunay as claiming to predict the future when they are actually manipulating it to exhibit the prophetic and paternal role that certain nationalist groups in Turkey play on behalf of the entire nation. Sunay creates a master-slave relationship with the part of the population he sees as an obstacle on the way to civilization. He idealizes the secular republic and his secular nationalist theatre company by attributing an almost metaphysical value to them.

What Pamuk critiques by using Sunay as a negative example is not Kemalism per se, but

the ways in which Sunay takes Kemalism to an extreme, where it loses meaning. In *Nationalism*, the Turkish historian and literary critic Murat Belge writes that in order to legitimate a new regime in a society grown accustomed to living under the authority of the Islamic order and the Sultanate for centuries, the Republic introduced Turkish nationalism as a means of creating solidarity and unity in the modern industrial society. Like Islam, which unites people under one faith (*ibadet*), Belge argues that Kemalism has a similar function of uniting people in Turkey. Pamuk remains critical of this blind commitment to either Islamism or secular nationalism. He uses Sunay and Blue as two stereotypical and negative examples of the populations divided along the axiom of Islam vs. secular nationalism/Kemalism. Pamuk maintains the view that underneath such politicized labels, there lies a wide range of overlapping ideologies and belief systems, whose complexity cannot possibly be economized by a simple dichotomy.

In *The Black Book*, Pamuk gives a humorous example of these two types of fanaticisms through the following dialogue between two characters: “‘What’s the difference between the Sultan and the Bosphorus Bridge?’ ‘Beats me’. ‘Between Atatürk and Mohammed?’ ‘I give up’” (128). As Pamuk points to the difficulty of discerning the difference between the ways in which Atatürk and Mohammed are respectively received by their followers, he makes a commentary on different communities’ tendencies to idolize certain figures to the extent of being dogmatic, and of creating myths. Pamuk often uses the name “Atatürk” rather than “Mustafa Kemal” when he critiques this kind of dogmatic reception in an ironic manner. As Erdağ Gökner states in “*Yeni Hayat ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Eleştirisi*,” (“*The New Life and a Critique of Turkish Nationalism*”) what Pamuk calls attention to is how the mass society in present-day Turkey has imprisoned Atatürk. In *The New Life*, there is a reference to how the tall apartments surround a sculpture of Atatürk as if they have trapped him (255). Similarly, in *The Black Book* one of the characters gazes at a sculpture of Atatürk whose index finger is pointing to the bus station as if he

tells everyone that they would be better off leaving the city/country. (337) In *Snow* too, there are a few references to Atatürk's sculptures and posters being attacked:

[P]arties unknown had poured coloured sewer water over the statue of Atatürk that stood outside the Atatürk Work Plant... they'd taken responsibility for a number of other anti-Atatürk incidents in the city (taking a hammer to the nose of the Atatürk statue that stood in the garden of the Trade and Industry Lycee, writing ugly remarks on the Atatürk poster hanging on the wall... (329)

Such examples show that among both the Kemalists and the anti-Kemalists there can be confrontations taking place on a highly symbolic and at times superficial level. Mustafa Kemal's persona is turned into an icon whose symbolic tokens –posters, sculptures, and so forth– are made to represent a monolithic moment in history in response to which all identity struggles as well as a restless social consciousness take place. He is either turned into a scapegoat, who must take all the blame for the tensions in present-day Turkey, or a hero whose symbolic figure must be defended at the expense of taking away people's freedom of speech and their right to criticize the official history.

Sunay is a perfect example of the latter group suggested above. He represents what Pamuk refers to as “1970'lerin gardrop Atatürkçülüğü” (Hakan 43).⁸ As an “exemplary” actor/intellectual on tour with his company in the “poor and backward” regions of Turkey, Sunay takes it upon himself to educate the people of Kars. Pamuk's critique of the character stereotyped by Sunay is also visible in the word “modern” in the phrase “Sunay Zaim's modern theater.” Sunay, who sees himself as modern, leftist, and revolutionary, ridicules himself at the night of their performance in the National Theater, where he begins his act with a well-known bank

⁸ The phrase refers to the superficial reception of Kemalist ideals during the 1970s. The word *gardrop* derives from the French *garde-robe* (wardrobe). Among Mustafa Kemal's reforms were the clothing and hat reforms, which outlawed the use of religious-based clothing, and encouraged the adoption of Western-style clothing. In reference to these reforms, *Gardrop Atatürkçüsü* refers to a follower of Atatürk who places more emphasis on the change of outward symbols than on the social and political motivations, which underlie his reforms.

advertisement, showing an “outrageous dandy” (*Snow* 147) making a deposit at the bank, and continues to put on obscene performances:

[The next sketch featured] a mustachioed man dressed up as a woman pouring Kelidor [Kelidor is a pun on words “kel,” which means “bold” in Turkish, and “Elidor,” which is a well-known shampoo in Turkey] shampoo and conditioner on her hair... Just as he did in those remote teahouses when he decided to bring some relief to his poor and angry all-male audiences with an “anticapitalist catharsis,” he treated tonight’s audience to a string of obscenities as he pretended to stick the long shampoo bottle into his back passage... It was a rich assortment of masochistic pleasures that his stories gave the audience, and everyone had a chance to smile at the misery of the Turk. (*Snow* 147-8)

This first act can be seen as a way for Sunay to prepare the crowd for his following provocative performance, which will serve as a catharsis for no one but himself. The main play that Sunay’s company stages is called “My Fatherland or My Headscarf.” Throughout the early years of the Second World War, the play was performed under the title “My Fatherland or My Scarf” all over Anatolia. It “was very popular with Westernizing state officials eager to free women from the scarf and other forms of religious coercion. But, after the fifties, when the ardent patriotism of the Kemalist period had given way to something less intense, the piece was forgotten” (*Snow* 150). The play has such a “sound dramatic structure that even a deaf mute would have had no trouble following it” (*Snow* 149):

1 A woman draped in a jet-black scarf is walking down the street; she is talking to herself and thinking. Something is troubling her. 2 The woman takes off her scarf and proclaims her independence. Now she is scarfless and happy. 3 The woman’s family, her fiancé, her relatives and several bearded Muslim men oppose her independence and demand that she put her scarf back on, whereupon in a fit of righteous rage the woman burns her scarf. 4 The neatly bearded, prayer-bead-clutching religious fanatics, outraged by this show of independence, turn violent, but just as they are dragging her off by her hair to kill her... 5 The brave young soldiers of the republic burst on to the scene to save her. (*Snow* 149-150)

While most of the people in the audience hope that this provocative play will end without causing trouble, the performance enrages both the republicans and the religious groups. On the one hand, the republicans, who “having expected a bespectacled village girl, pure-hearted, bright-faced and studious, to emerge from beneath the scarf... were greatly perturbed to see it was the lewd belly-

dancer Funda Eser instead. Was this suggesting that only whores and fools take off their headscarves?” (*Snow* 159) On the other hand, the religious high-school boys were shouting: “Down with the enemies of religion!... Down with atheists! Down with infidels! ... So why not take off everything and run to Europe stark naked?” (*Snow* 161-162). What the boys were upset about was not simply the manner in which the women with scarves and religious fundamentalists were depicted and caricatured, but the realization that “every time they threw half an orange or a cushion on to the stage, they were one step closer to a trap that had been laid just for them, the knowledge of their helplessness in this matter made them even angrier” (*Snow* 156-7).

Near the end of the play, right after Sunay finds out that a high school principle has been murdered by a young religious boy, a semi-theatrical *coup d'etat* takes place on stage and some of the guns, which turn out to be loaded, kill two people. The audience remains speechless, not knowing what to make of the play, the coup, and the loaded guns. Just as the actors dressed as soldiers appear on stage, the audience hears Sunay’s voice: “This is not a play—it is the beginning of a revolution... Soldiers, bring them over.” (170) This declaration reverses the hierarchy between art and politics as suddenly reality begins to imitate theatre. Upon Sunay’s words, the soldiers on stage take away the actors dressed as fundamentalists, and step down the stage to arrest some of the religious high-school boys in the audience. These semi-theatrical soldiers, who look like neither soldiers nor actors

were in tremendously high spirits... [for having been] allowed to take part in the performance that was to begin “the little revolution of Kars...” [Sunay] had resisted their proposal for a whole day, fearing that the involvement of the shady, armed adventurers would ruin the artistic integrity of the piece. But, in the end, he could not counter the argument that he might need a man experienced with guns to control the lowlives in the audience who were unlikely to appreciate the nuances of “modern art.” (*Snow* 164)

Snow can be read as an exploration of the relationship between history, theatre, and repetition.

We find both theatre imitating history and reality imitating theatre, all together giving rise to a

vicious cycle where, in an attempt to mimic history, Sunay imposes prescribed identity models that promote stereotypes. Instead of critiquing and examining history with a fresh perspective, every step Sunay takes towards the future takes him right back to the past. He makes positive change impossible, and locks himself in a vicious cycle. Despite the fact that Sunay aspires to become a national hero, Pamuk depicts him as a self-centered anti-hero.

Following the staging of the controversial republican play, the army announces the start of curfew restrictions. After this “revolution,” Ka recalls the curfews of his childhood, reflecting on the fears surfacing during such events.

The peacefulness of the empty street took Ka back to the curfews of his childhood, the census days, the days devoted to checking the electoral roll, the days given over to hunting for enemies of the state, the days when the military marched in and everyone would gather around the television and radio... As a child he'd loved those martial law days like holidays, when his aunts, uncles and neighbours would come together in a common cause. It was perhaps to hide the fact that they felt happier and more secure during military coups that the middle- and upper-middle-class families of Ka's childhood in Istanbul were in the habit of quietly ridiculing the silly actions that inevitably attended any military takeover... While the Istanbul rich had a terrible fear of the soldiers, they also knew the deprivations under which they lived—the harsh discipline, the low wages. The soldiers were peasants, and the rich despised them for it. (176)

Ka's short journey down memory lane re-plays the military interventions of 1960, 1971, and 1980, and recalls the fundamental changes that coups bring into public life. From a wealthy Istanbul family, Ka's reminiscences of his childhood pertain to the joy felt by the secular population, who both look down on soldiers to suppress their uneasiness concerning the Army's authority, and see the Army as the only means to protection from the Islamists or other dissidents of the state.

Undoubtedly, depending on their political stand, everyone in Turkey remembers the coups in a different light. In his interview with David Remnick from *The New Yorker*, Pamuk remarks that the sympathetic refer not to *coups d'état*, but more gently to “interventions” or “corrections,” and quickly point out that the Army never, in the Latin-American mode, remained

in power. Yet, whether one celebrates or regrets the military interventions of the past, everyone will acknowledge, as Zürcher writes, that “in many ways, the changes [that the coup of 12 September 1980] wrought consisted of undoing the work of their predecessors, the perpetrators of the coup of 27 May 1960” (292). As in previous coups, in the aftermath of the 1980 intervention, armed forces seized political power and forbid old politicians, “in an almost Orwellian fashion, to discuss publicly the past, the present or the future. The old parties, which had been suspended after the coup, were officially dissolved on 16 October, and their possessions were confiscated” (293). At the time, it was not only the politicians, but also the university professors, journalists, lawyers, and anyone else “who had expressed even vaguely leftist (or in some cases Islamist) views before September 1980 was liable to get into trouble” (294). In fact, Ka himself was exiled for publishing an article he did not edit carefully in this period and under such circumstances. Written in the shadow of the 1980s, *Snow* elaborates on the rise of political Islam in the 1990s, explaining it partly as a reaction to the inability of the left and the right-wing parties to move beyond a paternalist, centralist, and nationalistic propaganda since the 1980s.

A similar paternalism and Jacobinism to the one we find in the military coups is manifest in Sunay’s character. His Kemalism has no real foundation; it is about “history [giving] roles to certain people,” (*Snow* 198) as Sunay says borrowing the words from Hegel. The possibility of fulfilling an epic role is the driving force behind his commitment to theatre and politics.

He spoke openly about his domestic life, his daily routines, and his political views, re-making himself in Atatürk’s image... He took to posing with volumes of Atatürk’s classic work, *Orations [Speech]*... (when one unsupportive columnist who entered the fray early on ridiculed him for reading not the original version of *Orations*, but an abridged, pure Turkish edition, Sunay took the original out of the library and posed with it.) (*Snow* 205)

On top of posing with *Speech*, Sunay also holds interviews with anti-Western religious newspapers, posing with a copy of Koran in his hand, stating that “perhaps one day, when the public deems it fit, [he] might be able to play the Prophet Mohammed” (*Snow* 195). Of course,

this gives rise to yet another verbal duel between the Islamists and the Kemalists, neither of whom could accept being represented by an actor that is willing to play both Atatürk and Mohammed. After all, from the perspective of Islamist press, Atatürk was a *rakı* drinker. And, from the perspective of the Kemalist columnist, Atatürk would have nothing to do with religious fanatics. Throughout the book, Sunay's actions are depicted as both naïve and catastrophic as he tries to "push the truths of art to their outer limits, to become one with myth" (*Snow* 344).

With regard to his desire to become part of a mythical history in the making, Sunay's theatre can be seen as a teleological consumption of history rather than a critical analysis of the past. A keen defender of the state-centered ideologies, Sunay's interpretation of the two plays, *The Motherland or the Veil* and *Tragedy in Kars*, is founded on repetitive, rigid representations of historical events. In this respect, his art is perhaps best to be understood through the remark of Antonin Artaud, for whom, as Derrida recalls, "the menace of repetition is nowhere else as well organized as in the theatre" ("Theater of Cruelty" 247). Artaud's conception of the stage as a theological space dominated by a primary logos and an author-creator governing the passive spectators is relevant in understanding Sunay's theatre, where we find the "re-presentation and interpretation [of the present] permeated and leveled by a master-speech in advance" ("Theater" 238). Indeed Sunay's plays are interpretations of the secular-religious debate in present-day Turkey leveled and permeated by "master-Speech" of the author-creator Mustafa Kemal and the other Republicans which Sunay takes to an extreme. Sunay's desire to re-write history within the discursive space made available by this master-speech turns his theatre into a parody, which demonstrates the catastrophe of memory. Rather than breaking the vicious cycle perpetuated by the repetition of rigid historical models and critically examining history, he subordinates the present and the future to the narratives of the past. He has the fantasy of creating a "real-life drama," (*Snow* 364) a theater which becomes absolute.

In response to the struggles led by Blue and other Islamist groups in the name of God, Sunay the actor-commander descends on stage as *deus-ex-machina* in the name of Atatürk to bring about another revolution or coup to resolve the conflict between the religious and secular groups. Both in the play he stages and in real life, Sunay makes a contrived attempt to bring a sudden unexpected solution to a complex problem. While Blue uses the Koran to justify his actions, Sunay uses *Speech*, the sacred text of Kemalist ideology, to inform his decisions. Through a depiction of the discursive practices binding Sunay and Blue, Pamuk raises questions about both the Jacobins' misuse of Kemalism and the Islamists' misuse of religion, as well as their equally detrimental interference in Turkish democracy.

The impossibility of Sunay's task becomes evident when the reader finds that he provokes counteractive responses from the religious community that does not accept being "educated" and put in their right place within Sunay's narrative scheme toward a historical change. Sunay's attempt at regulating, representing, and repeating historic events under the umbrella of the National Theatre meets an obstacle. His own play throws his plans off course and surprises him. His fantasy of constructing a mono-cultural identity, determined by way of Hegelian economy, is interrupted by the reality of a deeply divided Kars. No longer placed under the restraint of a militant Western-style modernization, and battered by poverty and diminished possibilities, the locals of Kars on the verge of electing their first Islamist mayor appear "extremely suspicious of, and downright cynical about, the latest incarnations of the promises of 'enlightened and prosperous tomorrows'" (Kasaba 16). As one character, Muhtar, observes, in Kars "everyone wanted to die or wanted to leave... as if... erased from history, banished from civilization. The civilized world seemed far away and ... [we] couldn't imitate it" (58). In this respect, *Snow* complicates the characters' ambition to find a safe ground in either Westernist or anti-Westernist sentiments. The more autonomy each political group seeks, the more violence and self-

destruction they call forth, and the will to power overshadows the ideologies they fight for. We constantly come across characters who do not quite know where they stand in relation to Turkish and international politics, but they insist on their right to *belong* to a particular group and to exclude another. At the core of the many animosities, we find oppositions and counteractive responses, defined by their degree of attraction to or repulsion by the West. The increasing tension between Sunay's and Blue's circles, which I shall discuss in the following section, attests to the fact that the name of the "West" becomes an axis along which a hierarchical socio-economic structure is formed within the Turkish nation, particularly between secular and Islamist nationalists.

2.3.2 The "Return" of Islam

Following the bloody night of the play, Blue calls for a secret meeting in order to write a statement to the West, which he hopes to publish in the German *Frankfurter Rundschau* with the help of a journalist named Hans Hansen. It is Ka who tells Blue that he knows a journalist by that name. The reader, however, is informed earlier in the novel that Hans Hansen is actually the name of the salesperson who sold Ka his coat in Frankfurt, and the statement will never reach the press. In the statement, Blue reaches out to the West to ask them to interfere in the Turkish state politics and to recognize what he believes is an anti-democratic "local coup supported by Ankara" (295). Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, here refers to *derin devlet* ("deep state"), "a powerful cadre of high-ranking officials and members of the military who see themselves as guardians of the secular state" (Seyhan, *Tales* 99). Upon Blue's request, Islamist groups and Kurdish minorities come together under his leadership to provoke an anti-state upheaval.

In counterdistinction to characters like Sunay, who openly admire Western ideas for the sake of national progress, Blue both remains critical of the West for lacking moral values, and seeks its help in resisting state violence in Turkey. The meeting, which takes place at the Hotel of

Asia, turns out to include a group of Islamic revolutionaries, ex-communists, boys from the Kurdish association, and disillusioned leftists like İpek's father Turgut Bey. In defining the relationship of their home country to the ideals of Europe, the Islamic community finds itself in a double bind. For them, Europe is both security against the sovereignty of state, and a foreign land against which a strong sense of identity must be established and traditions be preserved. In his statement to the West, Blue poses the following question:

Will the West, which takes democracy, its great invention, more seriously than the word of God, come out against this coup that has brought an end to democracy in Kars?... Or are we to conclude that democracy, freedom, and human rights don't matter, that all the West wants is for the rest of the world to imitate them like monkeys? Can the West endure any democracy achieved by enemies who in no way resemble them? (246)

The images of the West and particularly Germany are repeatedly brought to bear as that against which Blue's circle defines itself. A young Kurdish boy remarks: "I'm proud of the things in me that Europeans find childish, cruel and primitive... if they're modern, let me stay pure" (301).

Here the Kurdish boy is appealing to the same exclusive, binary thinking that he believes is imposed on him by the Westerners. Juxtaposing modernism with purity, he reverses the hierarchy he seemingly resists, and shows more subjugation than resistance to the rhetoric employed by the likes of Sunay. While people in Blue's circle often emphasize that it is the West which assigns them the name *fundamentalists*, they do not hesitate to point out that after all there is "only one West and only one Western point of view" (246). The more they oppose each other, the more they become entangled by the force of their opposition; nothing interrupts this circle. In response to a problematic association of fundamentalism with Islam, a problematic *we* emerges. The problem with this mutual act of naming is that, to borrow Derrida's words in "Faith and Knowledge," "the two responses ought always to be able to contaminate the other. It will never be proven whether it is the one or the other" (29).

While Blue complains that "political Islam" is a name given to them by the seculars, he

does everything in his power to appear as a member of political Islam. In *Forbidden Modern*, Nilüfer Göle makes a distinction between political Islam and cultural Islam. “The former could possibly be defined as the ‘revolutionary’ Islam that struggles against Western ‘imperialist’ forces in order to defend Islamic identity and independence... In cultural Islam it is the individual, not the state, who gains importance... The revolutionary political orientation, however, exerts itself at the political level against ‘the enemy’ (i.e., the Western system)” (109). Blue, in many ways, builds his argument on an opposition against the western system, by treating it as the common enemy for the Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities in Kars. As Göle observes, in political Islamism, in contradistinction with cultural Islam, “regardless of the fact that the ‘enemy’ is defined in abstract terms (exterior forces, imperialism, the devil, etc.), the strength of the ‘opponent’ functions as the movement’s engine... The political orientation, which considers itself to be ‘encircled’ and ‘oppressed’ by the Western world, seeks to represent the Islamic actor and the values assumed by this actor” (111). Accordingly, Blue formulates his own identity by means of opposing the Western “other,” which he believes subordinates and oppresses his culture.

The question remains as to whether Blue would have an identity to claim in the absence of a negative Western model. Blue forcefully fulfills the role of the Islamic actor mentioned by Göle in his relationship with the surrounding enemy. His use of the word “West” can be understood both as West Europe and Westernized Turks who, like Ka, are perceived as the slaves “of the ruthless Europeans” (350). Just as Istanbul/Turkey is marginalized to Frankfurt/Germany, Kars is marginalized to Istanbul and to the rest of Turkey. More often than not, Blue hints that the secular/religious divide in Turkey and broader Europe is a question of cultural as well as economic discrimination:

Contrary to what our own Europe-admiring atheists assume, all European intellectuals take

their religion and their crosses very seriously. But when our guys return to Turkey, they never mention this, because all they want to do is use the technological supremacy of the West to prove the superiority of atheism (249).

What Blue seems to resist is the adaptation of Western ideas of progress putting forward global and universal values run according to “gentlemanly criteria.” However, Blue also contradicts himself the moment he takes shelter in the West he condemns. He is after all the only one at the meeting who has been to Germany and who quotes not only Koran and the twentieth century radical Islamist theorist Seyyid Kutub, but also Hollywood movies in his conversations. Blue is a primary example of the several double-edged characters in the novel. While anti-Westernism lies at the heart of all of his political undertakings, as he writes in his autobiographical note, he has easily turned from a godless leftist to an Islamist leader who occasionally justifies the necessity of killing the enemies of Islam. (348) As Seyhan notes, “most of these young people bear no resemblance to stereotypical images of young Muslim fanatics. Blue, a charismatic and handsome Islamist, is a walking paradox” (“Seeing”).

Blue and the younger boys in his circle define themselves through their anti-Westernism, whether it is anger or humiliation felt in the encounter with the West. This also becomes manifest in the dream of a young Kurdish boy from Blue’s circle. In his dream, the boy is watching a Western film and suddenly finds himself entering the film, into the sitting room of a Christian family. Across a “table laden with food; he longed to fill his stomach, but for fear of doing something wrong he kept his distance... [the beautiful blond woman] complimented him on his clothes and manners, kissed his cheeks... he felt so very happy... only then did he realize that he was still a child... It was because he was still a child that she found him so charming” (303). Kars, as a site forsaken by both the state and God, confirms, as one character puts it, the desire of marginalized peoples’ to show that “we’re not stupid, we’re just poor! And we have a right to insist on this distinction” (298). However, this rightful rejection is at once countered by Turgut

Bey's articulate question: "who do you mean, my son, when you say *we*?" (298). Pamuk is careful to expose both the injustice of economic hegemony and cultural discrimination, and the ambiguous nature of all othering that arises in response to it.

What the interaction between Blue's community and Sunay demonstrates is that both sides recognize the self-colonial dynamic in Turkey, but react to it differently. Whereas Blue's circle rebels against it, because they experience colonialization from both the pro-Western Turks and Europeans, and take their place in the lower divisions of the hierarchical ladder, Sunay celebrates it, because he associates himself with Westerners more than Turks—hence becoming both the colonizer and the colonized. In the midst of all the hierarchical divisions and the superior/inferior identity models circulating as a result of self-colonialism, not only Blue and Sunay but even more partial and reasonable characters such as Turgut Bey get carried away, and oscillate between big ideals and tragi-comic failures. When Turgut Bey agrees to participate in the meeting and enters Hotel Asia to sign Blue's statement, he sees a few shadowy figures beyond the desk that look like black marketers or plainclothes police. He reflects on how eighty years ago,

this hotel had been popular with Russian businessmen; after the revolution, most of its custom came from Istanbul Turks and aristocratic English double agents heading into Armenia to spy on the Soviet Union; now it was full of women who'd come over from Georgia and Ukraine to work as prostitutes and petty smugglers. (290)

Turgut Bey turns to his daughter Kadife and continues to describe his feelings as follows:

"The Grand Hotel, where İsmet Pasha stayed when he was negotiating the Treaty of Lausanne, was just as cosmopolitan as this," and with that he took the navy-blue pen out of his pocket. "I'm going to do just what İsmet Pasha did in Lausanne: I'm going to sign the statement with a brand-new pen." (290)

This tongue-in-cheek remark about the cosmopolitanism of Hotel Asia, filled with illegal workers and smugglers, is made even more comical by Turgut Bey's identification with İsmet İnönü, the second president of Turkey. Not only Sunay and Blue, but even Turgut Bey gets carried away by

the fantasies of achieving an important goal on behalf of the Kars community and the Turkish nation. The Treaty of Lausanne was signed by İsmet Pasha in 1923 to signal the end of the Turkish Independence War and to settle the borders of Turkey. With the treaty, the Allies of WWI (Russia, Britain, France, Italy, US) recognized the Republic of Turkey. Turgut Bey likens Blue's statement to the Treaty of Lausanne since the former is yet another opportunity to claim independence from the Western nations.

In the meeting at Hotel Asia, the counteractive response of Blue and the Kurdish boy to Sunay can be understood in relation to Derrida's notion of "auto-immunity." Derrida defines the "auto-immunitary process/auto-immune suicide" as "that strange behaviour where a living being, in quasi-*suicidal* fashion, 'itself' works to destroy its own protection, to immunize itself *against* its 'own' immunity" (Borradori 94). Interestingly, the very notion of immunity is originally based in a sociopolitical discourse, and has its origin in the legal concept of exemption. Derrida applies this metaphorical system, which draws on images of foreign vs. native back to the social body. In the context of *Snow*, we can use this concept to understand how both Sunay and Blue erect boundaries to preserve their purity from the foreign/invasive other, but this desire for purity calls into play its own impossibility; hence, the double bind. Every blow toward the other returns to the self, making it impossible to inhabit segregated states of being. To borrow Derrida's words, there is "nothing... safe... in the most autonomous living present without a risk of auto-immunity" (47). While Blue's initial goal is to criticize Sunay's actions and to prove the fact that he is treated as an "other" by the state, Blue ends up contributing to the discourse he seemingly critiques by reducing Sunay to an impenetrable "other."

Ironically, by the virtue of drawing a boundary, they are already including the other in their self-definition. What we call the exterior borders with the interior; exteriority is not "opening up an otherwise sealed interiority," as Keenan puts it. "Interiority is itself the mark... of

this breach, of a violence that in turn makes possible the violence or the love we experience as intersubjectivity” (Irzık, “Allegorical” 564). The definitive boundaries between the seemingly cultural and political dichotomies such as East and West, Islam and modernity, Sunay and Blue, remain more supple than rigid, as they relentlessly co-exist, in peace or violence. The exposure to the other, even through animosity, opens the self to the possibility of simultaneous justice and injustice toward the other. This possibility of justice does not simply concern the different political groups in Turkey, who contrast one another by associating themselves with either the East/non-West or the West. It is also crucial in understanding Turkey’s changing relations with Europe. Because “Turks became their own western eyes,” (“In Kars” 288) as Pamuk puts it, the counteractive dynamic, which exists between Blue’s and Sunay’s circles, takes as a basis the dynamic between Turkey and the West.

The pride-shame dynamic between the people surrounding Sunay and Blue mirrors the dynamic in Turkish-European relations. Pamuk raises this point in his speech titled “In Kars and Frankfurt”:

... [W]hen we prevaricate over our country’s relations with Europe, the question of shame is always lurking between the lines. When I try to understand this shame, I always try to link it with its opposite, pride. As we all know: wherever there is too much pride, and whenever people act too proudly, there is the shadow of the ‘other’s’ shame and humiliation... As Turkey knocks on Europe’s door... we’ve seen lamentable hardening of anti-Turkish sentiment in certain parts of Europe, at least amongst certain politicians... The most cruel irony of all is that the fanning of nationalist anti-Turkish sentiment in Europe has provoked the coarsest of nationalist backlash inside Turkey. (231, 234)

As Pamuk clearly articulates, both on a national and transnational level, we are facing the possibility of interrupting these counteractive responses. Beyond a simplistic East-West divide, both in Turkey and Europe, we witness the emergence of interconnected political systems, with their potential for creating new patterns of community.

In “Allegorical Lives: the Public and the Private in the Modern Turkish Novel,” Sibel

Izık argues that in *Snow*, the parody of “solid dramatic structures” and “the obsessive return of a theatricality that robs characters of ‘authentic’ lives has the function of exhibiting and exorcising the narrative’s own compulsion toward political allegory” (“Allegorical” 562). The events taking place between Sunay and Blue can be understood as a political, national allegory as well as a projection of the Turkish-European relationship. But what are we to learn from these allegories?

Pamuk uses Sunay and Blue as negative examples, as an example of that which does not work, because it gives rise to an uncritical repetition of the past. The final depiction of Kars given by Orhan as he leaves this city suggests that in the aftermath of all the events that took place among the many heroes of Kars—the state officials, Ka, Sunay, Blue, Kadife—no one remains in the picture. By the end of the novel, Sunay commits suicide on stage as part of a final theatrical/political act, and Blue ends up being murdered, just like Ka upon his return to Germany. As Orhan, the narrator, travels to Kars four years after this story takes place, he notes how “almost everyone [he] met on [his] walks around Kars was waiting for just such a hero, some great man ready to make the large sacrifices that would deliver them all from poverty, unemployment, confusion, and murder” (458). Yet, no such hero remains in the picture as the people of Kars continue to linger between an impoverished life and big ideals.

Snow does not end on an idealistic note, but this should not be understood in a negative light. The lack of a unifying closure to the book is intentional as it is a symptom of great potential for change and recreation. There is a hope that the Kars community retains by outliving the solipsist formations of collective identity promoted by Sunay, who tries to overcome all the frictions with a *coup d'état*, and descends on stage like *deus ex machina* to bring about a contrived solution, which proves harmful. This shows us that the problem is not so much the entanglement, but the risks involved in single-minded and despotic acts of untangling. Kars waits for a different kind of salvation.

The description of the Kars community following the three-day snowfall, having missed yet another opportunity to “stew in its own juices” and “to put... [their] house in order,” (31-32) resonates with the manner in which Derrida describes the French-Algerian community in

Monolingualism of the Other.

In a word, here was a disintegrated “community,” cut up and cut off. One can imagine the desire to efface such an event or, at the very least, to attenuate it, to make up for it, and also to disclaim it. But whether this desire is fulfilled or not, the traumatism will have taken place, with its indefinite consequences, at once destructuring and structuring... What then *are we*? Where do we find ourselves? With whom can we still *identify* in order to affirm our own identity and to tell ourselves our own history?... One would have to construct oneself, one would have to be able to *invent oneself* without a model and without an assured addressee. (*Monolingualism* 55)

How can a community, which outlives ongoing attempts to come together under one umbrella, construct itself? If this community is eventually going to speak back to all the authoritative figures that have enforced different names and collective identities on it, how will it manage to re-define itself without appealing to the already existing discourses? The necessity to reaffirm one’s identity without an assured model implies a break from the logic of exemplarity. The Western identity has been the example *par excellence*, both in a negative and a positive sense, from which the general notion of all identity has been derived in Turkey for decades. The logic of exemplarity is problematic, because it takes the “singular,” and makes it “universal,” and then implants hierarchical genealogical trees, centers, peripheries, bridges and so forth. But if the disintegrated community in Turkey can break with this logic, it can reformulate its identity by conforming neither to the Western nor to the anti-Western models, but by paying attention to the entanglement of the many Wests and the many Easts, which exist in relation to another.

Pamuk throws light on the entanglement of the different political groups in Turkey, by showing the complex ways in which Sunay and Blue, and the imaginary East and West, as seen from their perspective, are interlaced. Additionally, as I discussed in the previous sections,

Pamuk underlines other forms of entanglement, such as narratorial, authorial, and even romantic, to suggest the futility of trying to transgress, overcome, repress, or exclude the “other” who “addresses our most primitive hatreds, fears, and anxieties [...] thinking about this other in whom everyone sees his own opposite will help to liberate him from the confines of his self” (“In Kars” 228). Where diverse ideas come into contact, intersubjective relations can simultaneously lead to positive and negative occurrences. Yet Pamuk demonstrates, by using Sunay and Blue as negative examples, that an acknowledgement of this space of relation can open venues for mutual understanding. Even if the boundaries we erect to occlude the “other” cannot be dismantled altogether, they can be made flexible so as to allow for the reconciliation of different histories, cultures, and ideologies, interconnected and filiated as they are in complex ways.

The fact that the disintegrated community of Kars/Turkey faces the challenge of inventing its identity without an assured model implies that we can finally step out of the repetitive master-slave dialectic perpetuated by Sunay and Blue. The political-religious conundrums that contemporary Turkish society faces should no longer be perceived in terms of polar oppositions in need of a bridge to fill the gap, but in terms of entangled histories, which necessarily involve one another. If our failure to capture a sealed interiority makes possible an opening toward the other, this can be an opportunity to acknowledge the broader range of choices available to us in dealing with the other, and to see frictions as opportunities to produce solutions.

Pamuk provides us with an alternative lens through which to perceive the points of tension between Westernist-secular and anti-Westernist-Islamist nationalist groups in Turkey. Instead of yielding to either/or way of thinking, whereby one is pressed to make a choice between radical Kemalism or political Islam, Pamuk meticulously allows room for a wide range of perspectives we can take advantage of in dealing with these tensions. As he notes in an interview with David Remnick:

[y]ou make an aesthetic choice, and my choice is to find a place that is equally detached from the cruelties of the Army and the cruelties of political Islam. And if you can occupy this place long enough full democracy could take hold in this country.

Pamuk manages to keep a distance from the pressures of both the Army and political Islam, by revealing the fissures inherent in the unified narratives of these ideological positions. Just as there is not only one East or one West, as these groups would have us believe, there are more than two political positions we can occupy while re-evaluating the different aspects of modern Turkish identity.

I propose that Pamuk's depiction of the complex interaction between different communities also enables us to question the so-called return of religion in secular Turkey. *Snow* demands that when we speak of a certain return of religion today, we do not grow exhausted of asking ourselves what it is that is returning. In secular Turkey, there is a fear of *sharia* that keeps coming back. This is partly due to the difficulty of imagining a moderate Islam that is not politicized and a democratic laicism that is not militant. Each time we hear the word Islam, to borrow Derrida's words from *The Other Heading*, "... we can fear seeing return the phantom of the worst, the one we have already identified" (18). *Snow* disturbs such fears. While Pamuk exposes the inconsistencies of political Islam through the characterization of Blue, he also communicates the idea that religion should not so eagerly be associated with political Islam or a catastrophe of civilization.

In fact, the way Sunay and Blue respond to one another suggests that it is difficult to think of the rise of Islam without military interference, or of modernity without religion. In order to better understand the so-called return of religion in Turkey today, one must recall that in an ongoing struggle to deal with Islam following the foundation of the republic, the military interfered in state politics whenever the secular-Kemalist ideals came under threat. This authoritative role of the military in Turkey illustrates the difference between Turkish *laiklik*

(laicism) and other forms of secularism. In *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*, Andrew Davison refers to Bromley's observation concerning the "Kemalist opposition to religious intrusion into public life," and calls attention to the fact that "the militant secularism of the state amounted to rigid state control over religious life, and a strict laicism in public affairs" (Davison 135). The promotion and the use of the military force as the protector of democratic, secular values against Islam enabled the state to step into the picture whenever Islamic movements were on the rise. Sunay's semi-theatrical coup in *Snow*, which he ironically calls "revolution," is in reference to this haunting presence of the military.

Because it has been difficult to think of the rise of Islam without the rise of military interference in Turkey in the past decades, Pamuk draws attention to the counteractive dynamic between Sunay and Blue, whose actions can only be understood in relation to one another. Their co-existence invites us to understand what Derrida means when he suggests that "the said return of the religious is a complex and overdetermined phenomenon... which comports, as one of its two tendencies, a radical destruction of the religious" ("Faith and Knowledge" 42) and must be thought in its double phenomenon:

The word *resurgence* <*déferlement*> imposes itself upon us to suggest the redoubling of a wave that appropriates even that to which, enfolding itself, it seems to be opposed. (46-7)
... [I]t is not certain that in addition to or in face of the most spectacular and most barbarous crimes of certain "fundamentalisms" (of the present and the past), *other* over-armed forces are not *also* leading "wars of religion," albeit unavowed. (25)

Derrida's statements support the underlying concerns in *Snow*, namely that there is a connection between the violence committed by Sunay's Jacobinism and the violence perpetuated by Blue's political Islamism. The two resurge in reaction to one another. The tensions in between at times loosen and other times tighten, but bind them by the virtue of their opposition when they least expect it. Both Sunay and Blue are tempted by the possibility of a new community or nation, where the voices that contradict their system of belief can be left out, overcome, or repressed. As

I suggested earlier, Pamuk shifts the focus from these ideals of transgression to the possibility of a collectivity with malleable borders. He envisions the different groups as ebbing and flowing into one another like waves. This wave analogy, which Derrida uses, enables us to imagine a network of filiations, whereby different groups overlap, diverge, and converge, always remaining in a space of relation, and even including that which they seem to be opposed in their self-definition.

In this respect, the notion of a “new” life is challenged in *Snow*. What Kars/Turkey needs is not an absolutely new beginning, a heroic interference, a *deus-ex-machina*, but a recognition of existing dynamics in order to find peaceful ways of solving the old problems resurging in complex scenarios. In fact, the illusion of a “new life” is critiqued in *Snow* on a symbolic level, when Ka and İpek meet for the first time in the “New Life Pastry Shop” in Kars. The same night they meet, the director of the Institute of Education, who had barred covered girls from the classroom, gets shot by a fundamentalist at the pastry shop in retaliation for enforcing the state’s policies against the headscarf girls. Like several names in the novel, the name of the pastry shop is highly symbolic, and refers to the title of one of Pamuk’s earlier novels, *The New Life*. In *The New Life*, the story revolves around Osman, a university student that grows an obsession with a mysterious book, whose content is never fully revealed to the reader throughout the novel, which opens with the following statement: “I read a book one day and my whole life was changed” (3). This mysterious “book” influences Osman to the extent that it alienates him from his family and surroundings: “It was with such a powerful influence that the light surging from the pages illuminated my face; its incandescence dazzled my intellect” (3); “losing sight of the book was the only thing that frightened me” (7); “I was afraid even to think the book might be a mystery constructed for my sake alone” (8). After reading the book, Osman’s search for a new life presses him to follow the “signs,” leading him to what he hopes is the “ultimate” meaning of his life. The

story, however, ends with him dying in a “merciless and inevitable” (259) car crash. Osman’s failure to uncover the original authentic moment, “the word” that would give meaning to everything, enables the reader to experience a different kind of awakening.

As he realizes he is not going to survive the accident, Osman thinks to himself: “I knew it was the end of my life. And yet I had only wanted to return home; I absolutely had no wish for death, nor for crossing over into the new life” (296). It is not only Osman’s inability to emerge with the ultimate meaning of his life that shatters the dreamy affect of the book, but also the unavoidable cruelty of this final scene where the reader witnesses Osman’s revelation at the moment of his death. In this sense, Pamuk’s novel is a modern tragedy, where Osman’s obsession with the “new” is an allegory of the rupture experienced during the transition from Ottoman to Turkish cultural life (Gökner 334). In that transitional period, there was a desire to invent a new national identity uncontaminated by Arabic influence. Ziya Gökalp, the penname of Mehmed Ziya (1876-1924), one of the leading figures of the Turkish national movement in the early 1900s, wrote a book of poems titled *New Life* in 1918, and published an article titled “Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymatlar” (“New Life and New Values”) in the journal *Genç Kalemler (Young Pens)* in 1911, where he disseminated nationalist ideals and promoted his vision of a pre-Islamic Turkey. As Mani notes, Gökalp’s work “is a call to the Turkish nation to leave behind the threatening heterogeneity of the Ottoman Empire and move toward an ethnically and racially homogenous national composition” (158). Gökalp’s vision of a synthesis of Islam and Western civilization constitutes the founding principles of the Kemalist program as it marks the quest for an “authentic” (in contradistinction to borrowed or imitated) cultural life during the transition from Empire to Republic (Gökner 330). It is this new homogenous national identity sought in the Young Republic that Pamuk calls into question both in *The New Life*, and in *Snow*, where Sunay and Blue respectively pursue a new life that would justify the self-validating polarities.

The quest for a new life often equates to an unfair distribution of power among the different groups in the society, some of which become underrepresented or silenced altogether. In *Snow*, we do not simply come across the cultural and socio-economic divisions between secular and Islamist groups, but also between men and women. On the one hand, we find Sunay staging plays depicting women liberated from religious coercion, the young assassin and Blue defending the right or rather the requirement of the girls to wear headscarves and to abide by their fathers' and lovers' word, and other male characters are concerned with the subjectivity of women as social actors. On the other hand, these same women, who are silenced by the male figures who speak on their behalf, constitute a disturbingly monolithic category. The "headscarf girls" do not only make up for the speechless choir and the background motif of the story, but they also become an object of study whose right to speak is simultaneously given and taken away by the male members in their immediate environment.

What is at stake for the assassin, who kills the director of the Institute of Education at New Life Pastry Shop, for example, is not simply the freedom of girls to wear headscarves to school, but the visual symbolism attributed to these actions. As Göle writes, "in Muslim societies, political power and power relations between sexes are interrelated" (73). Accordingly, "women are the touchstones of this Islamic order in that they become, in their bodies and sexuality, a *trait d'union* between identity and community" (Göle 21). The assassin rejects the director's claim that unveiled women occupy a better and more respectful place in the society: "That might be what the film-star daughter of yours thinks, but the opposite is true. Head scarves protect women from harassment, rape, and degradation... The veil saves women from the animal instincts of men in the street" (49). Having two male characters debate the reasons and the implications of women wearing headscarves suggests that what is in question here is not so much female

freedom and security. The boundary between “*mahrem* and *namahrem*,”⁹ (35) as Göle remarks, becomes a public matter that is “better handled” by the state officials and the fathers and boyfriends of the women lurking in the background.

In fact, whether the young girls really kill themselves because of the headscarf ban or other reasons remains a mystery. Since suicide is a sin in the Islamic culture, the death of several young women is seen as an issue that needs to be covered up. Therefore Blue and other Islamists make this suicide epidemic a part of their political agenda, and conveniently hold the regulations of the secular state responsible for these deaths. It is interesting to note that while *Snow* is a novel based on the headscarf girls’ suicide epidemic in Kars and everything that happens somehow revolves around this issue, it is also marked by the absence of a strong intervention by women characters. *Snow* is a male-centered story with two female characters at the backdrop in addition to the choir of invisible, speechless young girls whose suicides¹⁰ are reduced to symbolic events by the men surrounding them, whether they be their fathers, lovers, husbands in forced marriages, or even the protagonist who finds himself entitled to conduct research about them.

The two most prominent female characters and public figures in the book are Turgut Bey’s daughters İpek, who has divorced her husband Muhtar, the district head of the Prosperity Party, because he was asking her to cover herself, and Kadife, who goes from modeling in Istanbul to veiling herself and becoming involved with Blue (previously involved with İpek) in Kars. The political involvement and the complex romantic relationships of these women are always lurking at the novel’s background. However, the reader has to wait until almost the end of

⁹ *Mahrem* is a word that is associated with the intimacy and the secrecy of home, the inner world, whereas *Namahrem* refers to the outer world/the shared public sphere.

¹⁰ As Seyhan observes, “the suicide theme is ripped from headlines and thus interlinks the fictional theme with lived history. Batman, a city in Eastern Anatolia, where Kurdish resistance, political Islam, and state intervention were locked in an ongoing struggle, was the site of an epidemic of suicides by young women. These women, who were forced into marriages that they did not want or who were terrorized by their fathers and husbands, began killing themselves in spates” (*Tales* 101).

the novel to encounter a heated declaration by Kadife. During the second play, *Tragedy in Kars*, Kadife decides to publicly remove her headscarf, in spite of Blue's and her father's warnings, to prove that "she is her own person" (435). A symbol of political Islam and the object of desire for the young Islamist men, Kadife makes a declaration that makes her the spokesperson for several of the young girls who have committed suicide within the past year.

After taking it upon herself to claim that women, unlike men, commit suicide to "show pride," (430) with the "hope to gain something," (431) rather than the desperation of losing, Kadife receives the news that Blue and Hande (a young girl escaping the pressure of her father) were killed. Despite Kadife's defense of suicide as a conscious decision, it is Sunay, and not her, who commits suicide on stage as part of his plan to die heroically, repeating the same trick of real bullets in a prop gun, this time fired by Kadife. However, before Sunay dies, Kadife's act of unveiling herself as a means to assert her autonomy comes as a response not only to Sunay's reductive plays on women's liberation from religious coercion, but also to political Islam's ideal of a female figure. Kadife is aware that her actions will not be well received by Blue or the religious boys who admire her. Her decision supports Göle's theory that "Islamization has gained visibility through the veiling of women; in other terms it is women who serve as the emblem of politicized Islam" (83). Kadife shatters both what ŞirinTekeli refers to as the Kemalist symbols of "state feminism," (Göle 81) and the symbols attributed to her by the political Islam's idealized image of women as "militant in society and traditional in the private sphere" (Göle 118).

Kadife's unveiling is mainly a response to the conflicting yet equally pressing expectations of Sunay and Blue, who impose their visions on the women surrounding them. However, it is also a means of taking back the power swept away from the girls whose deaths are represented by Kadife as hard-headed attempts to gain something. In other words, in this final scene, even the headscarf issue is turned into a question of who holds more power. Is it Blue or

Sunay? Is it the girls who killed themselves to make a point? Is it Kadife who becomes the final spokesman for all these girls? How a subject as sensitive as youth suicide can be overshadowed by the thrill of power can perhaps be best explained by a confession that Ka makes after a long walk with Sunay and his bodyguards, following the staging of “My Fatherland or My Head Scarf: A play about a girl who burns her headscarf” (156). Supposedly a neutral and benevolent character, the reader hopes that at least Ka will judge all matters with a certain sensitivity, yet even he admits to being seduced by the thrill of power that comes from standing next to Sunay on the one hand, and burdened by “his guilt about the girls committing suicide” (214) on the other hand. These conflicting emotions inspire Ka to compose a “sound and considered” (214) poem, wherein “the events he had witnessed in Kars had found their most powerful and authentic expression” (214). Titled “Suicide and Power,” this poem, like Ka’s other poems, is not present in the novel. Like the novel Osman reads in *The New Life*, the absent poem symbolizes how “at the heart of every ideology we construct, be it... Turkish nationalism, or Islamic/militant messianism, there lies a big ‘secret’ which is semantically empty” (Almond 79). Underneath the different ideological struggles lies an even deeper desire for power and hegemony, which turns personal matters like religion and faith, or worse, actual people like the girls who suicide, into politicized symbols.

This takes us back to Meltem Ahıska’s statement introduced at the very beginning of this chapter, which calls attention to the reified images of the West produced in Turkey to justify the boundary management of dividing spheres and people along the axis of East and West. Such rigid identities and socio-economic divisions are imposed on the public in Turkey in response to the imagined West that to this day we continue to fear the narratives we constructed for ourselves. The distinct notions of what the East and the West entails with regard to the role of women, religion, or the military in a secular nation still hold value in many segments of the society. It is

these boundaries and preconceived notions of Eastern and Western identities that Pamuk meticulously critiques in his novel.

Today, the situation in Turkey is certainly different from the 90s when *Snow* takes place, but the increasing power of the *AKP* demonstrates the ongoing relevance of the issues raised in the novel. On the one hand, the recent developments in Turkey are perceived with contentment due to the democratic proceeding of the elections and the absence of military interference. Many people hold the view, as Ka remarks in *Snow*, that “only twenty percent of the people give their vote to the Islamists. And to a moderate Islamist party at that” (*Snow* 350). On the other hand, many others fear that despite its advocacy of democratic and economic reforms, as a political party affiliated with religious community, the *AKP* may have an Islamist agenda. While one must be careful not to make hasty decisions, we would do well to remember that today civil protests are replacing military take-overs, the political party with religious affiliations wants to safeguard its future in the EU’s universal democratic principles, and the majority of the population advocates a peaceful co-existence of *laiklik* and Islam. What democracy and religion mean in Turkey still remain to be defined.

Snow sheds light on the entanglements and the confrontations, both friendly and antagonistic, which supersede and resist the boundaries drawn over the past few decades. Pamuk encourages us to formulate new narratives, with their potential for surprising history’s monologue. An acknowledgement of the resemblances in difference between various communities, or what Pamuk refers to as their secret anthropological history, offers us a broad range of choices in dealing with the other we eagerly push aside through destructive rivalries.

When I use the phrase “resemblance in difference,” I do not make a move toward “unity-in-difference.” By contrast to the *Bildungsroman*, where difference is treated as a contingent element reconciled through synthesis, what I propose here is a simultaneous recognition of

differences that resist pure sameness, and of similarities that resist pure difference. Attention to resemblance in difference retains an understanding of the ongoing tensions conditioned by the entanglement of self and other. Pamuk offers an accurate picture of the tensions within the modern nation-state to illustrate the ongoing interaction between different communities. His depiction enables us to approach the persistent problems within Turkey in a more productive manner. A step away from the circular narratives of the past and the segregated subjectivities these narratives promote takes us a step closer toward future collectivities and hospitable patterns of communication.

3 MOTHER TONGUE, A TRANS/NATIONAL COLLAGE

3.1 Introduction: Turkish-German Encounters

My discussion in the previous chapter on Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* provides the reader with a lens through which to perceive the political climate in modern Turkey in relation to Turkey's engagement with the West. The counteractive dynamic between Sunay and Blue, as well as their competing ideals about their home country's relationship to the West, gives rise to a tension that resists single-minded solutions. What is explicit is that although the West is represented as an imaginary discursive space, it is constitutive of the way the characters define their identity and the ideals of the Turkish nation. Germany, in particular, overshadows and interferes in this self-definition to a great extent. Following the labour recruitment agreement signed between Turkey and Germany in the 1960s, and the mass migration that followed, the history of the two nations became tightly intertwined. The lingering presence of Germany in Turkish history is felt in *Snow* on many occasions: in Ka's exile and long-term residence in Frankfurt, in the old-communist-recycled-nationalist Z. Demirkol's escape to Germany after the military take-over in 1980, in the Kurdish boy's dream where he is treated like a child by the German family, and finally in Blue's hope of receiving support from the German journalist writing for *Frankfurter Rundschau* to resist the Turkish state. In *Snow*, many Easts and Wests are entangled in such complex ways that Pamuk's sharp criticism reaches beyond the conventional East-West divisive line, and is directed to the homogeneous conjectures of the Turkish national culture and the larger political world.

This chapter will build on the previous as it will continue to raise questions concerning the East-West tension in Turkey and in its relationship to Europe, but I will take a broader perspective here and study a literary work that takes us to the very borders between Turkey and Germany. My purpose here is to study closely the first three stories in Emine Sevgi Özdamar's collection of stories entitled *Mother Tongue (Mutterzunge)* (1990). While the East-West tension

in *Snow* is studied in the light of the secular-religious conflict and different forms of nationalism in Turkey, in *Mother Tongue* the question of language and national identity is studied in a migratory context. Unlike in *Snow*, Germany ceases to have a ghostly presence in Özdamar's work as it becomes a major point of contact between Turkey and Europe. *Mother Tongue* revisits the question of self-colonialism experienced within Turkey *vis-à-vis* West in the context of the borderline cultures, where the social realities of two nations variously intersect, overlap, and diverge. Whereas Pamuk appeals to double-edged characters in Turkey to challenge identitarian purism within the nation, Özdamar develops a critical double consciousness, by creating characters who engage with more than one culture and language.

In contrast to Pamuk, who has spent most of his life living in Istanbul and writing in his primary language, Özdamar moved to Germany at a very young age and began writing in her second language, German. Born in Malatya, Kurdistan in 1946, Özdamar first moved to Berlin in 1965 as a factory worker. A few years after moving to Germany, she returned to Turkey to study drama in 1967. Nine years later, after the closure of many theatres following the 1971 military coup, she again left Turkey and moved to East Berlin to work as an actress and an assistant director with Bertolt Brecht's pupil Benno Besson at the Volksbühne. She worked at the Schauspielhaus in Bochum from 1979 to 1984 during which time she began to write. She wrote her first play *Karagöz in Alania* in 1982, which premiered in Frankfurt in 1986, and published a prose version of it in *Mother Tongue*. After finishing her second play *Keloğlan in Alania* in 1991, she wrote three novels in a sequence: *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei hat zwei Türen aus einer kam ich rein aus der anderen ging ich raus* (*Life is a caravanserai: has two doors, I came in one, I went out the other*) (1992); *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (*The Bridge of Golden Horn*) (1998); and, *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde* (*Strange Stars Stare Toward Earth*) (2003).

She published her second collection of stories titled *Der Hof im Spiegel* (*The Courtyard in the Mirror*) in 2001.

A German citizen since 1996, Özdamar continues to reside in Berlin and has established herself as a leading author in the German literary scene. The prestigious awards she has received, such as the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize (1991) and the Kleist Prize (1994) given to Germanophone writers, attests to her positive reception in Germany. Özdamar occupies a unique position with regard to her connection to both the Turkish diaspora in Germany and the German society. On the one hand, she comes from the diasporic community she represents as she first moved to Germany to work at manufacturing industry, and spent a lot of time with other workers of different backgrounds. Hence, she writes with a certain awareness of the historical and social conditions of the Turkish diasporic community in Germany, and not merely as a detached observer. On the other hand, her current position as an established intellectual (writer-actress-director) in Germany unsettles the reception of Turks by the mainstream German society as figures of “ethnicity as alienated labour,” (33) to borrow Rey Chow’s terms. Chow points out that “a laborer becomes ethnicized because she is commodified in specific ways, because she has to pay for her living by performing certain kinds of work, while these kinds of work, despite being generated from within that society, continue to reduce the one who performs them to the position of the outsider, the ethnic” (34). By that account, ethnicity becomes a “flexible social mechanism” (Chow 34) for determining the boundaries between foreign/native. Özdamar displaces the outsider/insider dichotomy, by resisting such commodification-ethnicization through both her career and writing, thus enabling “new forms of affiliation rather than reproducing familiar patterns of differentiation” (Adelson 133) between the Turkish and German cultures.

As for Özdamar’s reception in Turkey, so far only two of her books have been translated into Turkish. In addition to a memoir titled *Kendi Kendinin Terzisi bir Kambur* published in

Turkish in 2007, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* was translated into Turkish in 1993, and *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* in 2008. It is ironic that her work reaches Turkish readership only after she has become a renowned writer in Germany, considering her writing is heavily concerned with a re-examination of the Turkish cultural and political history. Özdamar moved to Germany during the tumult of 1970s Turkey, when, following the economic recession in the later 1960s, the increasing social unrest, marked by labour strikes and political assassinations, led to left-wing workers' and students' movements, countered on the right by Islamist and militant nationalist groups. During this time, Özdamar herself was "briefly arrested and detained because of reports she had written after the military putsch of 1971" (Horrocks, "Living" 45). Özdamar's works are filled with references to this historical moment, which suggests that she may have found a more comfortable writing space on exile, where she reconciles her abiding personal, cultural, political connections to Turkey in the image of the German language.

Özdamar is a first-generation Turkish-German writer, who established a life in Berlin about a decade after the first mass migration from Turkey to Germany began. The roots of the contact between Germany and Turkey can be traced back to the formative years of the German nation-state, when "in order to realize Adenauer's vision of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle), the Federal Republic of Germany signed *Anwerbeabkommen* (recruitment agreements) with Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), and Turkey (1963)" (Mani 46). Particularly, after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, "workers from so-called *Anwerbeländer*, recruitment countries, played an important role in satisfying the demand for labour which had previously been met largely by the westward migration of refugees from East Germany" (Kürşat-Ahlers 113). A large number of Turkish workers migrated to Germany in this period to work, mostly, in manufacturing industry. The term *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker) was introduced in reference to the workers of Turkish and other minority ethnic backgrounds. *Gastarbeiter* came in reaction to

Fremdarbeiter (foreign workers), which invoked feelings of guilt, because it was in reference to the 7.5 million foreign workers recruited from German-occupied territories between 1939 and 1945 to replace the workers fighting for the German army during the Third Reich (Mani 47).

The foreign workers' expectations of finding a more prosperous life in Germany, however, were going to meet obstacles. "The principle of *rotation* which had dominated when recruitment commenced, included an obligation on the side of the worker to return to his home country. [Although] this was displaced by the principle of *integration*, a motivation spearheaded by employers to keep the workforce they had trained," (Kürşat-Ahlers 113) when Germany declared an *Anwerbestopp* (recruitment freeze) in 1973 in response to the economic crisis, the principle of integration came into conflict with the exclusion of the foreign labor force, who were given restricted residency rights and were deported when their services were no longer needed. "The word *Gastarbeiter* immediately became compounded with other nouns and appeared in the news media as *Gastarbeiterproblem...* and *Gastarbeiteravalanche*" (Mani 48). At the end of the twenty-year history of migration from Turkey to post-war Germany, as Kürşat-Ahlers underlines, "only in the late 1980s did the concept of a multi-cultural society, which had earlier emerged in the United States and Australia, begin to appear in German political discourse" (114). Yet, despite the emerging discourse of multiculturalism, the reception of Turkish-German people in the mainstream German society has confined them between two impenetrable and mutually exclusive worlds, home and foreign land.

Even the terms used to refer to the first literary works written by Turkish-German authors reflected this dichotomy between home and foreign land. The first examples of the literary works produced by Turks and other ethnic minorities entered the public sphere under the rubric of the rather ambiguous term *Gastarbeiterliteratur* (guest workers' literature) in the 70s. This was supplanted in the 80s, as Ülker Gökberk points out in "Understanding Alterity:

Ausländerliteratur between Relativism and Universalism,” by more neutral *Ausländerliteratur* (literature of the foreigners) (146).¹¹ Despite attempts to re-name the literary production by the newly emerging writers of foreign origins, in a country where citizenship has long been measured by *ius sanguinis* (a law of blood lineage or familial descent),¹² most of the terms found appropriate to accommodate the writing of Turkish-German authors such as *Gastarbeiterliteratur* and *Ausländerliteratur* refer to their non-Germanness.

As Adelson notes, in the debates about migration to Germany “Turks occupy a central representative position, not on a vibrating tightrope, but on an inflexible bridge ‘between two worlds’” (*Turkish Turn* 5) presumed to be originary and intact. Adelson critiques this analytical paradigm, and argues, by quoting the Turkish sociologist Yasemin Soysal, that the concept of “between two worlds” is a “paradigmatic conceit,” (*Turkish Turn* 4) which suspends “immigrant experience between home and host countries, native and foreign lands, homebound desires and losses—thereby obscuring the new topography and practices of citizenship, which are multiconnected, multireferential” (*Turkish Turn* 8). I agree with Adelson’s point to the extent that thinking of migration as a condition of being “between two worlds” gives rise not only to nationalist but also ahistorical diaspora theories, which turn a blind eye on the complexities of transnational identities in transition. As Adelson notes, Özdamar remains critical of the intact tropes and unifying narratives of nationalism, by promoting a “scalar understanding of interactive contexts—as opposed to a dichotomous model of discrete worlds” (*Turkish Turn* 11).

¹¹As Gökberk notes, “a further question is whether *Ausländerliteratur* could be considered a subgenre and a new form of exile literature. The term designates in German literary history the works of a particular period, namely 1933-1945, written by prominent authors who had fled Hitler’s regime” (148). This literature was written in the native language of its authors.

¹²“Part of this law was changed effective January 1, 2000, such that children born on German soil to a non-German parent who has resided legally in the country for eight years are now entitled to German citizenship” (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 7).

But my argument diverges from Adelson's at the point where, taking a "conceptual leave from a model of incommensurable differences," she stresses "a broad range of common ground, which can be thicker or thinner at some junctures" (*Turkish Turn* 20). What interest me are the entanglements, which loosen and tighten by displaying both positive and negative tendencies, not the "common ground." I contend that even when there are overlaps among the various worlds/ideologies/collectivities that undulate into one another—and in which the transnational actors variously participate—these overlaps do not amount to a common ground, but to a collage of differences in resemblance, and ruptures in continuity.

I remain skeptic of both nationalist and post-nationalist approaches to diaspora. Whereas the former promotes two rigid worlds that sustain no genuine interaction, the latter—which has arisen in reaction to the former in the 1990s—dismisses the value of national identity altogether, and promotes deterritorialized, free-floating hybridities. I shall argue that both these approaches remain insufficient for articulating the changing categories (im)migrants occupy. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the increasing prominence of transnational economic, cultural, and population flows, and the resurging debates on multiculturalism in Europe, the idea of national and linguistic purity looks more like fantasy than reality. Yet even as diasporic communities reconfigure the nation and national identities through their transnational interventions, these ideas cannot be rejected outright, because diasporas are often in a productive tension with both their homelands and hostlands.

My goal in challenging the bridge metaphor in the context of Turkish migration to Germany is not to break down the differences between homeland and hostland, or to dismantle the borders altogether by reducing them to one and the same. What interests me is to call into play the complexities of the interactions taking place across several worlds—not only two—which are entangled on a number of levels across undecideable borders. In other words, the exilic

condition, the feeling that one does not belong to a singular world, does not imply an entrapment between two stable worlds; rather it suggests a network of entangled worlds, whose landscape is multi-referential. In this respect, the transnational actors encounter what Derrida calls an aporetic experience, whereby “‘being home’ [*son ‘chez elle’*] disturbs the co-inhabitants” (*MO* 57); and, the sense of belonging to a communal identity is coupled by an abiding feeling of alienation. Although the aporetic experience is not unique to transnational subjectivities, it is accentuated by exile, which magnifies the problem of belonging by taking it to a transnational level.

I will use Özdamar’s work to demonstrate that transnational literary texts illustrate a critical double consciousness, which resembles Derrida’s double bind. On the one hand, Özdamar questions aggressive and insular nationalist and cultural identitarianisms that objectify and promote pure difference; on the other hand, she also cautions us against a universalizing tendency, which flattens out all claims of difference under the pretence of a free-floating hybridity. As other scholars of diaspora have noted, “to affirm that diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment is not to write the premature obituary of the nation-state,” (Tölölyan “The Nation-State and Its Others” 5) because “the diasporic subjectivities invoked by creative artists (or religious leaders) are shaped *in tension with* prior or more widespread hegemonic diaspora discourses and modes of institutional organization; they are never simply a response to exile and alienation per se or to the sense of marginality and cosmopolitanism these engender” (Werbner 7). Nations—both the land of ancestry as well as the land of residence—and diasporas are social formations and cultural subjectivities that reciprocally inform and maintain one another.

I prefer to use the terms “transnational, diasporic, or exilic” in reference to Özdamar’s work, rather than the terms “immigrant or ethnic” for two reasons. First, the term transnational does not erect a definitive boundary between home and foreign land, and/or place the symbolic

immigrant in the immutable and unproductive space in between. Rather it shifts the focus from the ethnic classification of immigrants to a creative space opened by cross-national imaginary. Second, it calls for a critique of belonging to a closed national community while retaining the idea of national integrity to a certain extent so as to avoid pursuing patterns of assimilation. The term transnational sustains the tension between difference and sameness, rupture and continuity, singular and universal, yielding neither to the national nor to the global.

Additionally, as Seyhan writes, the “term *ethnic literature* implies that its signified is not an integral or natural part of a land’s literary history. The same is true of immigrant literature” (*Writing* 10). She adds that this body of cultural production constitutes a transitory tradition in national literary history, and who or who is not an immigrant is often defined within this tradition by one’s increasing/decreasing assimilation to dominant cultural norms. “Immigrant/ethnic literature” hence falls short of registering the tensions that constitute the transnational subject, as depicted by Özdamar.

Özdamar’s work expresses both the pain of dislocation and discrimination that Turkish immigrants suffer, as well as the inevitable interlacing of Turkish and German culture in diaspora. This can be seen from the ways her characters participate simultaneously in multiple national and linguistic identities while escaping a sense of belonging to a homogeneous national culture. This multiple participation without singular belonging is characteristic of transnational subjectivity. On one level, Özdamar’s writing both reveals an attachment to the narratives of nationhood and recognizes that these narratives are ever-shifting; on another, more critical, level, it articulates emerging border spaces of culture and language in which insular tropes of nationalism are displaced and transformed.

I contend that Özdamar thinks of the Turkish-German diaspora as a transnational social community and a cultural subjectivity that privileges neither continuity nor rupture, for it displays

both tendencies at once. Özdamar's transnational characters embody the tension between what is lost and gained, forgotten and remembered during migrations across diverse geopolitical contexts. They re-imagine both German and Turkish national identities by retaining nationhood as a set of malleable socio-cultural characteristics that can and should be redefined as the communities that make up these nations shift and change. At no point does Özdamar transform diaspora into a deterritorialized or free-floating subjectivity, because she grounds the tension between nations and diasporas by focusing on characters who are confident in situating themselves "sequentially and simultaneously in contesting and overlapping positions of cultural memory" (Seyhan, *Writing* 114). Her work is rooted in and invokes various expressions of the interaction between the Turkish and the German communities, which necessarily overlap and involve one another.

Özdamar demands a "restorative work of cultural memory to accord meaning, purpose, and integrity to the past" (Seyhan, *Writing* 15). If culture is memory, and memory marks a loss, then "in the process of recounting, the status of memory itself is often challenged, and its hidden baggage of nostalgia is dismantled and repackaged through irony, parody, and allegory, so as to prevent an uncritical examination of history and to keep alive the challenge of learning through remembrance" (Seyhan, *Writing* 17). *Mother Tongue* reminds us of the growing presence of the immigrants who make up the Turkish German diaspora with their transnational crossings and connections, who overwhelm the boundaries they constantly cross in order to gather hybrid forms of identity through a collage of the dispersed and re-assembled segments of cross-national memory.

In Özdamar's stories, critical remembrance of the narratives of the past is engendered through linguistic re-formulations of identity. As Seyhan notes, "all human interaction and forms of transaction take place in the interiority of language, in its folds, crevices, ruptures, and through

its ritualistic choreography” (*Writing* 110). As I shall discuss in more detail in the following pages, Özdamar writes in German, but combines German and Turkish expressions and idioms, mixes codes and speech types to create a unique language, which goes well beyond being a mimetic tool. The passage from dialectical to dialogic narrative in Özdamar’s work occurs through a linguistic thread, reflecting the obstacles as well as the creative possibilities encountered in transnational narratives. In this respect, Özdamar achieves linguistically what Pamuk achieves thematically.

The reason why Özdamar places emphasis on language is because language is considered to be one of the main determinants of national identity, and thus it holds a symbolic value in the articulation of the interaction between Turks and Germans. “The irreducible untranslatibility of one’s language and cultural idiom marks for many writers the space of exile and defines... diasporic pathos” (Seyhan, *Writing* 13). Much of the early literature focusing on Turkish-German experience has interpreted this space of exile in language as a form of loss, paying attention to the linguistic inaccessibility of the host culture to the migrant population, and the inability of building a constructive dialogue between the Turkish and German populations that come into contact with each other.

For example, in John Berger’s *A Seventh Man*, written in early 1970s, we come across an account of the alienating experience of the nameless migrant worker in third-person narrative. The author states that “to be homeless is to be nameless,” (229) and offers his observation of the silent migrant in a series of short lyrical passages grouped under three sections: departure, work, and return. Berger refers to the symbolic worker as “He”. “He” is at times Turkish, other times Yugoslavian or Italian, but always the figure of the absence of speech. His silence is photographed while he is sitting alone on a train, standing in a line during medical examinations, posing next to a factory machine. There is no agency in the present, as “He” is arrested between

“the past [which] becomes fixed and the future [which] withdraws” (Berger 177). Berger’s account is problematic for two reasons. First, Berger’s emphasis of the incommensurable difference opened up by translation, as Bhabha asserts, risks eliciting “racist fantasies of purity” (“DissemiNation” 317). Second, noting that “the talk of entering the other’s subjectivity is misleading,” (Berger 94) Berger proposes an understanding of

the inner workings of the objective economic system. And so, if the forces which determine the migrant’s life are to be grasped... Metaphor is needed... yet his migration is like an event in a dream dreamt by another. As a figure in a dream dreamt by an unknown sleeper, he appears to act autonomously, at times unexpectedly; but everything he does—unless he revolts—is determined by the needs of the dreamer’s mind. Abandon the metaphor. (Berger 41-43)

In Berger’s account, which is illuminative in many other respects, a problem arises when he claims that his account abandons the metaphor. Like Berger, Bhabha argues that “the encrypted discourse of the melancholic... opens up a void... as a radical antimetaphoric” (“DissemiNation” 315). I disagree with both Berger and Bhabha on this point, because ironically, Berger’s “antimetaphoric” account cannot escape the metaphorization of which he remains critical; the migrant depicted by him becomes a metaphor for irreducible translation. As Deniz Göktürk observes, Bhabha’s remark further contributes to the victimizing authenticity imposed on the diasporic communities: “even Homi Bhabha, the great propagator of hybridity, following John Berger’s *A Seventh Man*, imagines the Turkish migrant worker in Germany as an incommensurable, alienated, speechless victim without any voice.”

The events, characters, and maps in this documentary-like narrative are surprisingly similar to those we encounter in Özdamar’s stories. Yet, Özdamar’s text relentlessly moves away from the representation of the marginal, victimized “other” while she retains differences that distinguish the Turkish German diasporic subject from mainstream German culture and society. Berger’s “unquestioning privileging” of the “naïve” migrant becomes problematic as Özdamar no

longer immobilizes the immigrant's image in the melancholic figure of speechlessness. Instead, her characters remind both the Turkish and German readers, as the Turkish-German author Aras Ören writes in "Dankrede Zur Preisverleihung," that "Europe is the reflection of my countenance, and contrariwise: I am the reflection of the countenance of Europe. My speechlessness is that of its own" (Mani 1). Rejecting the label of "speechless subjects," as seen from the perspective of the Europeans, Özdamar's characters take back their voice. They are outspoken and sensitive, vulgar and funny, hopeful and despairing; in short, they are anything but silent subjects. Özdamar invents a unique language to articulate the complex experience of borderland cultures situated at the intersection of German and Turkish cultural imaginaries, and demands the reader to penetrate "the historical fabric" (Seyhan, *Writing* 10) of the language of the "other."

Seen from this perspective, Özdamar prevents language from becoming a site for cultural hegemony. An example that comes to mind with regard to the issue of linguistic hegemony in the earlier representations of Turks in Germany is Sten Nadolny's novel titled *Selim, oder, die Gabe der Rede* (*Selim, or the Gift of Speech*, 1990). The book tells the story of a friendship between Alexander, a German writer, and Selim, a Turkish guest worker, with the backdrop of the 1960s in the Federal Republic of Germany. As Adelson remarks in "Opposing Oppositions: Turkish-German Questions in Contemporary German Studies," this novel poses a radical break with the trope of Turkish speechlessness as Selim is presented as a story-teller of genius, yet it is still the German author/narrator who speaks/writes *on behalf* of Selim, whose stories are mediated. We can approach Özdamar's stories as a reaction to such linguistic underrepresentation of Turks in the literature about the Turkish-German experience.

On a final note, I want to share the following discussion ensued by Gökberk, which makes an important point concerning the role of language in understanding the changing interactions between Turks and Germans.

In 1984, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, a publishing house which has played a leading role in the introduction of *Ausländerliteratur* to the West German readership, published the anthology *Türken deutscher Sprache* (Turks of the German language)... In a brief introduction the good intentions that underlie this publication are contrasted with the “current prejudice” (*das gängige Vorurteil*) of the Germans *vis-à-vis* the other, here, the Turk. This “current prejudice” concerns language and is articulated in the condescending motto *Du nix sprechen Deutsch* (You no speaking German). The anthology *Türken deutscher Sprache* undertakes to correct this bias: “Many people are not yet aware that there is, in the meantime, *already* a literature of the Turks of the German language, that many Turks who live and work with *us*, also write poems and stories in *our* language. The texts in this volume give the occasion to get acquainted with this new literature, and with the manifold possibilities in it...” The striking point of this humanitarian statement is the degree of the astonishment implied in the use of the adverbs and pronouns I have underscored. They emphasize that the “guests” have come a long way to express themselves in German. (154)

To allude to the problem, which lies at the heart of such editorial commentary, Gökberk brings into play Todorov’s analysis of Columbus’ confrontation with the Indians. Columbus’ inability to comprehend the difference between the linguistic traditions, Gökberk writes, “leaves him with the following alternative when he confronts a new language: he either recognizes it as a new language but rejects the idea that this language could be different from his own; or he accepts the difference but refuses to believe that it is a language” (155). Gökberk then poses the following question: “In this vein, are the German publishers and editors of *Türken deutscher Sprache* pleasantly surprised that the Turks have finally learned to speak, or that they have learned to speak ‘our’ language?” (155)

The editors’ response to Turks who speak and write “just like” Germans demonstrates that the problem is not simply linguistic, but that there is a broader question of socio-economic and cultural division concealed in the said crevices of language. The question is not simply whether Turks can speak German, but whether they are able to speak at all. According to Gökberk, this is the indirect assertion made by the Western critic trapped in a self-referential Eurocentric notion of culture—“Western critical thinking undecided about how to talk of

differences and ironically ending up in a reflection yet about itself” (146). Gökberk calls attention to the Western critic’s tendency to assimilate or reject the “other” altogether.

In response to this either/or kind of thinking, Özdamar provides both German and Turkish readers with a productive alternative. She takes the initiative of offering a benevolent hand by writing her books in German, allowing direct access to her stories for the German readers, but she also uses this opportunity to recognize the challenges of speech and translation experienced by the Turks in Germany. As Seyhan asks,

[i]f language is the single most important determinant of national identity, as many have argued, and narratives (specifically, epics and novels) institute and support national myths and shape national consciousness (e.g. Finnish epic *Kalevala*), what happens when the domain of national language is occupied by nonnative writers, writers whose native, mother, home or community language is not the one they write in?” (*Writing* 8)

Özdamar’s narrative, both thematically and linguistically, evokes the necessity for the German (or any non-Turkish) reader to understand the exilic experience from within that space, neither fully assimilated to or completely estranged from the host cultures and the homeland, nor lingering hopelessly between two impenetrable realms.

As the Turkish-German author and critic Zafer Şenocak observes, in dealing with other cultures, there is a tendency to assume we understand their language, “but only when it is completely different from... [our] own. Sword-swinging, death-conjuring fundamentalists are easiest... not so much the individual but the masses”; from there one can “plant his genealogical trees, paint characters and typologies” (*Atlas* 11). In order to avoid such identitarian purisms, Özdamar holds a mirror to entangled genealogies that are difficult to classify under a singular national or ethnic identity. She keeps at check our tendency to create incommensurable differences so as to keep the “other” at a safe distance. A close look at the multi-referential cultural and linguistic memory of the transnational agents invites us to be hospitable listeners and

speakers, receptive of the irreducible hybridity of the histories embodied by the multitude of tongues.

3.2 Mother Tongue, Grandfather Tongue

3.2.1 Nostalgia, Memory, Language

In the first two stories of the collection written in sequence and titled “Mother Tongue” and “Grandfather Tongue,” Özdamar dismantles the notions of purity and origin on a linguistic level, by mapping out the disjunctive new idioms, which arise through mobility. The multi-referential aspect of migration and transnational living is reflected in the multi-referential complexity of language. Language becomes a site of lost and recollected memories in these tales where the narrator is a nameless Turkish woman living in divided Berlin. Her life conveys autobiographical anecdotes from Özdamar’s life, as the narrator informs us of having first arrived to Germany as a factory worker, in the aftermath of which she begins her training in the Brechtian theatre.

The story opens with a metaphor, and the following description of a telephone conversation the narrator had with her mother. The opening lines right away mark a loss. The loss of mother tongue is conveyed in the very first page to prepare the reader to reflect on this lack:

In my language, “tongue” means “language.” A tongue has no bones: twist it in any direction and it will turn that way. I sat with my twisted tongue in this city, Berlin... If only I knew when I lost my mother tongue. My mother and I sometimes spoke in our mother tongue. My mother said to me, “You know what? You just keep on talking, you think you’re saying everything, but suddenly you jump over unspoken words, and you just keep talking. And I, I jump with you and breathe easily.” (*MT 9*)

The loss of the narrator’s mother tongue is intensified by her inability to communicate her mother. In the following pages, we find the narrator oscillating between her memory of the Turkish language, which seems to her like a foreign language she knows well (*MT 10*), and German, a foreign tongue where “words have no childhood” (*MT 52*). She tosses together words

in Turkish and German, placing emphasis on the physicality and the sound of each word: “to see: *Görmek... Görmek*: to see” (MT 12). From the opening lines, the narrator repeatedly asks herself where and when she lost her mother tongue: “Stand up, go to the other Berlin. Brecht was the reason why I originally came here. Perhaps there I’ll be able to remember when it was that I lost my mother tongue” (MT 13-14). Wondering about where and when she lost her Turkish, the narrator decides to take lessons in Arabic from a man named Ibni Abdullah. From this point forward, the narrator’s visit from East to West Berlin, “in the corridor between the two Berlins,” (MT 14) becomes an allegory of her connection to the pre-republican Turkish past, preceding Mustafa Kemal’s language reforms (when the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet).

I’m going to go back to the other Berlin. I am going to learn Arabic, which was once our system of writing. After our war of liberation, 1927, Atatürk outlawed the Arabic script and brought in the Latin letters. My grandfather only knew Arabic script, I only know the Latin alphabet, which means that if my grandfather and I had been unable to speak and could only tell each other things in writing, we’d have been unable to tell each other stories. Perhaps only by going back to Grandfather will I be able to find my way back to my mother, back to my mother tongue. (MT 15)

The Turkish language reforms of the 1920s, which took the West as a model and replaced Arabic script with Latin alphabet, were directed largely against Arabic, Persian, Muslim, and Ottoman influences. These reforms among many played a key role in establishing the national identity of modern Turkey. The narrator’s decision to learn Arabic is thus symbolic of her nostalgic attempt to recuperate a sense of her roots that she feels were lost during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. This nostalgic desire exemplifies an important characteristic of diasporic existence, “not necessarily involving a physical return but rather a re-turn, a repeated turning to the concept and/or the reality of the homeland” (Tölölyan, “Rethinking Diaspora(s)” 14). The narrator’s re-turn takes place on a linguistic level; she seeks an authentic Eastern origin uncontaminated by Western culture by learning the grandfather tongue Arabic, an originary

moment of the homeland that will never be recovered in reality.

Because actual physical return is not possible for the narrator, linguistic return through “performative memory... manifests itself in bodily practices” (Seyhan, *Writing* 153). Faced with the impossible fantasy of taking a literal journey to the past, the narrator inscribes the forgotten language on her body as a means of re-claiming lost cultural memory. She searches for her mother tongue as the “ultimate homeland... as though the language were a *remains* of belonging” (*Of Hospitality* 89). The narrator decides to learn Arabic in order to recover the childhood of Turkish words in the Arabic language, seen as the roots/origin of the Turkish language. Her search for the childhood of Turkish words in Arabic can be understood in relation to the search of “displaced persons, exiles... [who] share two sources of sighs, two nostalgias: their dead ones and their language” (*Of Hospitality* 87). For Özdamar’s narrator, language functions, to borrow Derrida’s words, as “the *fantasy* of property that, as close as could be to our bodies, and we always come back there, would give place to the most inalienable place, to a sort of mobile habitat, a garment or a tent... But also an immobile home since it moves about with us” (*Of Hospitality* 89).

While crossing the East-West border in divided Germany, the narrator remains critical of not only Turkish language and culture, which represents a rupture from the pre-Republican past and marks an epochal turn toward the West, but also of German language and culture. Here an extending double critique of German economic hegemony as well as Turkey’s censorship on alternative religious and political views can be found. On the one hand, “Özdamar implicitly maintains that she can have much easier access to the study of Arabic in Germany than in Turkey, where her desire to reclaim her ‘grand-father tongue’ could be construed as a reactionary gesture in the context of the laicist ideology that underwrites modern Turkish education” (Seyhan, *Writing* 122). The narrator’s reasons for leaving Turkey are implicit, but several

references throughout the story indicate that her departure had to do with her political stand during the tumult of 1970s Turkey. Not only her desire to reconcile with Arabic roots of the Ottoman culture, but also her active involvement in politics could be seen as reactionary gestures in Turkey in that time. The narrator makes the following remark to Ibni Abdullah: ““I have left behind so many dead friends. They hanged seventeen-year-olds then. According to my government I am a Communist”” (MT 18). There is also a reference to a mother whose son had been executed during the 1980 military coup for being “an anarchist” (MT 10). This reference places emphasis on the protagonist’s own oppositional status in Turkey, where her working at the Communist Commune did not only put her into political trouble, but also caused her problems as a politically active woman.¹³ As one police commissar, who came to arrest her friends in the Commune, implied, she was perceived as a heartless prostitute (MT 14) for being involved in the leftist movement as if she were a man.

On the other hand, although the narrator and her Arabic teacher can only communicate in German, “the voice of narration records this as a sign of lamentably rough-hewn relations, and German is marked as a language of crude exchange. Allusions to capitalist principles of exchange may be closer in this inaugural scene than they first appear” (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 156). Both Germany and the German language become the symbols of capitalist principles. At one point, Ibni Abdullah confesses to the narrator that her presence excites him so much he cannot stay in

¹³ We come across different expressions of Özdamar’s political engagement as a young woman in Turkey in her others novels as well. Set at the backdrop of Turkey’s turbulent political history, *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* tells the story of a young woman moving to Germany as a guest worker in late 1960s and 1970s. Initially a naïve young girl who works at the factory and thinks “Nietzsche was the German prime minister,” (37) the narrator gradually becomes involved with the communist hostel warden, and discovers the works of Brecht, Marx, and Engels. Throughout the narrative, we find excerpts from *Cumhuriyet*, the Turkish newspaper, and references to the rising anti-imperialist youth movement. Particular emphasis is placed on THKO (The People’s Liberation Army of Turkey), which consisted of a group of university students three of whom were hung by the state in the early 1970s on the charge of attempting to overthrow Constitutional order. The reference to the Turkish boy in prison in “Mother Tongue” can be understood as a commemoration of the death of these university students, which to this day, continues to be re-visited as a national trauma.

the room anymore. When leaving, rather coldly, he says “I wish you a lovely afternoon.” To this the narrator replies: “That’s very German” (*MT* 47). Soon after, the crudeness of this casual expression is juxtaposed by the narrator’s heartfelt words: “Love is a shirt of fire. Press a stone to my heart. With what language shall my mouth speak so that my beloved sees it” (*MT* 47). In contrast to German, Arabic becomes the language of mysticism and divine love.

Arabic is conjured, mostly by means of German words, as an eroticized language of Islamic mysticism. Because “Grandfather Tongue” weaves a tale of the Cold War as a lived phenomenon, we would do well to remember that Marxism too, meant to reveal the mystification of social relations under capitalism, entails a language of mysticism in a different key. (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 156-7)

In “Grandfather Tongue,” the mysteries of Islam and Communism, the two mirror opposites of capitalism and social taboos in modern Turkey, are embodied by Ibni Abdullah and the narrator. “Ibni Abdullah said: ‘... My seven brothers died in the war. I too was wounded. I spoke out rather too loudly against the government. They accused me of being a member of the fanatical Islamic brotherhood’” (*MT* 18). Ibni Abdullah then remarks that in Germany one can go to the park and say one’s opinion out loud, because there is democracy. To this the narrator responds in the following manner: “How many times in these nine years have you gone in the park and said your opinion aloud? Money has no fear here, it has teeth” (*MT* 18). Whether the narrator is really a Communist, or Ibni Abdullah a member of fanatical Islamic brotherhood remains mostly irrelevant here. What matters is that in contrast to the mysticism of Arabic-Islamic culture, German and to a certain extent Turkish languages and cultures become the symbol of Western capitalism.

Özdamar’s critique of the prohibition of Arabic, following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, runs parallel to her critique of capitalism. As she “incorporates the divided scene of modern Germany’s most emblematic city into splintered recollections of a taboo Turkish past,” (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 153) and exposes “Turks appearing on the periphery of German-German

drama of unification,” (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 137) language becomes the site of communist/capitalist exchange at the outset of the Cold War.

The Turkish woman who narrates “Grandfather Tongue” lives in East Berlin, repeatedly crossing the border into West Berlin to make contact with a pre-republican Turkish past that Atatürk’s sweeping language reforms of the 1920s, directed largely against Arabic, Persian, Muslim, and Ottoman influences, had effectively obliterated. Although these reforms played a key role in establishing the national identity of modern Turkey, as is well known, they might also be situated in a transnational context of alphabet reform. This broader frame of reference encompasses not only the capitalist west, which Turkey under Atatürk sought to emulate culturally, but also the communist east, to which many Turks had a political aversion and an ethnic affinity. (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 150-1)

The republican reforms in Turkey, which took capitalist West Europe as a model, signalled a turn away from both the Islamic and the communist influence on modern Turkey. As Adelson argues, the epochal turn toward the West marks a contrast between German/Western capitalism and its mirror opposites: Islamic and communist mysticism.

During these literal and allegorical journeys, when the narrator goes back and forth between the two Berlins to meet a man who can only communicate with her in the stepmother tongue of German, there is an increasing value attached to Arabic, a symbol of Islamic mysticism uncontaminated by Western materialism. Particularly when the narrator and Ibni Abdullah begin to have an affair, the visual, aural, and gestural representations of the Arabic language become highly eroticized. In contrast to the German language, which, like a razor blade, “entered my body, ran through me, and there was no more pain” and makes the narrator feel as if she had “lost my mother tongue there, then, that time,” (*MT* 13) she willingly lets Arabic enter her body through an eroticized relationship with Ibni Abdullah.

The narrator’s relationship to language is physical from the start. Özdamar says in an interview that for her language is “a physical thing. You must remember that my first encounter with German was via theatre. I experienced the language as it were bodily... You could almost say that words themselves have bodies” (Horrocks, “Living” 47). With such physical presence,

language ceases to be a set of abstract, immutable concepts and becomes a living phenomenon, one that the narrator feels under her skin. Language in *Mother Tongue* is as dynamic and expressive as the human body; it is an undeniable source of love and pain. It is inseparable from the singularity and the finiteness of the person speaking it. As Derrida writes in *Of Hospitality*, language “is the least immovable thing, the most mobile of personal bodies, which remains the stable but portable condition of all mobilities... that which never ceases to depart from me. Language only works *from* me” (91). Visible, tangible, and corporeal, language is a living component throughout Özdamar’s narrative.

The physical embeddings of Özdamar’s language become more manifest when she takes Arabic lessons from Ibni Abdullah in the second story titled “Grandfather Tongue.” During the lessons, Arabic letters rise from the pages and take on physical shapes: “Some looked like a bird, others like a heart pierced by an arrow, others like a caravan [...] others like eyes that cannot sleep” (*MT* 20). In addition, human expressions and gestures turn into letters, which resemble Arabic calligraphy: “Ibni Abdullah’s face looked like an angry letter with one raised eyebrow” (*MT* 22); “my hands lay like tongueless letters in my lap” (*MT* 28); “his guards, his words, stood in the room, some sitting squarely with their legs crossed” (*MT* 51). The corporeal representations of the Arabic language show that the “writers of the diaspora are particularly sensitized to forms of symbolic re-membering in the body” (Seyhan, *Writing* 153). The narrator both gives bodily form to the Arabic language, and embodies this language in order to re-member the lost culture physically by re-inscribing it on the body.

As Seyhan notes, “the narrator’s experience of both language and love through her body also marks a celebration of Arabic calligraphy” (*Writing* 120). The physical representations of language and the “corporeally grounded metaphors” (Haines and Littler 129) run parallel to the sexual desire the narrator begins to feel for Ibni Abdullah:

I close my eyes, the voice of love will make me blind, the texts keep talking, my body opens like a pomegranate cut open in the middle, an animal comes out from the blood and dirt. I look at my open body, the animal grabs hold of my open body, licks my wounds with its spittle... The fire, which came out of my "Oh," only Ibni Abdullah's fire can put out.
(MT 31)

As the narrator's Arabic lessons gradually lead her to fall in love with Ibni Abdullah, who is a substitute for her grandfather, he demands that she fully commit herself to him by shutting herself in his house for forty days to study the Arabic "text." Ibni Abdullah wishes to enclose her behind the curtain, dividing his house into two sections, one for him and his students, and the other for the narrator. The curtain here functions as "the symbolic equivalent of veiling her from other men's eyes" (Haines and Littler 132). What started out as a pedagogical relationship has turned into a quasi-incestuous affair, and the narrator's nostalgia for an ordinary identity or culture has turned into a risk of subjugation to Ibni Abdullah's linguistic and patriarchal authority.

The return to the grandfather tongue also implies a return to the roles assigned to women in the tales of the narrator's grandparents. Throughout the story, *Sabır* in Turkish, *Sabr* in Arabic (MT 46), "patience" is a major issue. As Bird writes, the narrator's "voluntary subjugation" (167) to Ibni Abdullah is followed by stories and sayings she heard from him and her grandparents all of which conclude on the note that woman's "patience is rewarded" (167). The narrator begins to tell the tale of a girl by using an expression, as Seyhan observes, that comes from the highly metaphorical Turkish oral tradition, where fairy tales begin with the following lines: "'Once there was, once there was not' [*Es war einmal, es war keinmal*] (31), the Turkish version of 'once upon a time,' a turn of phrase that does justice to the rich ambiguity of the past" (*Writing* 123).

The tale is about a girl who was visited by a bird that asked her to sit for forty days with a dead man. So she did. But on the thirty-ninth day, a woman came by and tricked the girl into drinking a potion that made her faint. The man, who woke up next to the other woman on the fortieth day took her to be his wife while the girl became a servant. The girl, however, waited for

him with a patience-stone in hand. Eventually she earned him back when the other woman was tied to the tails of horses running to the mountains and killed (*MT* 39-40). This story, along with the other teachings of Ibni Abdullah and the myths the narrator recalls hearing from her grandfather, all contribute to the idealized image of the patient, suffering woman.

The narrator, however, remains immune to this expectation from women, which would require her to abandon a physical engagement with language for the sake of finding God's sacred language, the origin of all languages. In order to reach a sacred and exotic place, the narrator needs to be patient, refrain from bodily desires and escape the pictorial sensuousness of Arabic calligraphy. In short, she has to leave her body. The following conversation she has with Ibni Abdullah finally makes her realize that she cannot stay.

“... Can't we make love in a sacred way, isn't that possible?”

“When the body forgets, doesn't the soul forget also?”

“I won't forget.”

“How can I walk with a silent body?”

“You see, you are not studying the text properly.”

I said: “I will tear up all the pieces of writing.”

Ibni Abdullah said: “If you do that, I will throw myself in the first lake I find. I want sacred love.”

... Then Ibni Abdullah locked me in and went away. (*MT* 51)

The narrator rebels against the “silent body,” a symbol of the insensitivity and the patience revered by the Islamic tradition, as her body opens to the sounds of the text. Gradually the narrator's awakened desire for sexual fulfillment becomes an obstacle to her study of Arabic script, which embodies Ibni Abdullah's ideal of sacred love. Despite Ibni Abdullah's admonition, “[y]ou are impatient, not concentrating... The text will not forgive you,” (*MT* 37) the narrator admits that “I didn't learn the text properly, because I kept talking with other words to the Ibni Abdullah who was within me” (*MT* 36). This last confession suggests that the narrator has not fallen in love with the real Ibni Abdullah, but the Ibni Abdullah in her, meaning the symbolic value that he holds for her as she begins to internalize and romanticize him.

In this respect, the narrator's desire for being with Ibni Abdullah in search of her past can be seen more as an autobiographical exercise, a desire for an "archeological dig," (Horrocks, "Living" 50) as Özdamar calls it, rather than a desire for Ibni Abdullah himself. Hence in contrast to the many critics who interpret her position as subjugation to the patriarchal Islamic tradition, I contend that the narrator is willingly experimenting, sliding in and out of traditional and modern roles, languages and histories, by taking advantage of Ibni Abdullah's presence on a symbolic level. She does not shut herself in his house for forty days because he demanded her to, but because she wants to continue her search. At the same time, because she cannot quite respond to the traditional roles attributed to her by Ibni Abdullah or by her grandparents, she re-formulates these roles and, by extension, her relationship to him.

For example, when Ibni Abdullah divides the study room with a curtain, leaving her to sit on one side, while teaching Orientalist Arabic script to students on the other, the narrator constantly finds herself distracted by words and gestures that interrupt with the possibility of an authentic context or self-realization. When she hears the students recite Koranic verses from the other side of the curtain, a Turkish song comes to her mind, mingling with the Arabic words of the students:

Koran: "When that day comes, no soul shall speak."

Turkish song: "My whole life long I will keep your pure love in my heart."

Koran: "Unless with his permission."

Turkish song: "I will never soil it, even if I must throw myself into the flames."

Koran: "As for the miserable, they'll be thrown into the fire."

Turkish song: "I shall never have enough even if I lay for a thousand years on your bosom." (*MT* 38)

As the lyrics of the song mingle with verses from the Koran, they "have the effect of decentring any 'original' and 'authentic' context" (Bird 171) of national and cultural identity. As Bird argues,

[b]ecause it is impossible for language to be anchored in one authentic context, the narrator can positively incorporate the Arabic of the Koranic verses, acquiring the cultural depth to her language and her identity which she set out to find, without accepting the female role which both she and her teacher associate with the scriptures... identity depends not on a rupture with language and the traditional discourses it perpetuates, but on looking at the significance and potential of those discourses out of that traditional context. (172)

The narrator experiments by de-contextualizing the traditional and reflecting on how the familiar takes on a different role once it is placed in a new context. This reconfiguration contributes to the making of a cultural identity expressed through new linguistic contexts created by de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing the traditional and contemporary texts/cultures re-configured in relation to one another.

We must read the narrator's crossing of territorial boundaries on both literal as well as various symbolic levels. Her movement is grounded at the national level between Turkey and Germany, at the expressive level between prayers and love songs, at the linguistic level between Turkish, Arabic, and German, and at the cultural level between East and West, and Islam and modernity. As the narrator travels back and forth between communist East and capitalist West Germany, or (on an allegorical level) between Republican and pre-Republican Turkey, "myriad splits and couplings" become "thematically explicit and narratologically manifest" (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 151). These pairs do not function as dichotomies, but are entangled in complex ways. "Abstract patterns and literary conceits of halving, dividing, coupling, and re-memorizing... are filtered through enlivening affects not properly divisible by two" (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 155). It is on these interwoven and mutually permeable pairs that identity operates and transnational subjectivity is produced.

This double consciousness demonstrates the impossibility of returning to a safe origin, a sacred space to be accessed through the Arabic language embodied by Ibni Abdullah. Although the narrator wants to continue to study the text and give Ibni Abdullah the sacred love he wishes,

she fails to respond to his demand: "I couldn't study. I threw someone in the courtyard the key to the study and he opened the door. I went out of the room for the first time" (MT 52). The narrator then goes to a place close to the Autobahn (highway) and throws away the text. As she finds herself near the German highway, symbolic of movement and mobility, she feels like a migrating "... bird. Flown from my country, I was on the highways on the edge of the XY-unsolved-cities" (MT 31).

Bird comments that the narrator's failure "to conform to the figure of the patiently waiting and suffering woman" (167) reveals to the reader that her forty-day subjugation are mythical days of temptation for her:

She is tempted by the fantasy of a simple, homogeneous and prescribed identity... During the period of her involvement with her Arabic teacher the contrast between her mundane experiences out on the streets of Berlin and the exciting allure of the carpeted room is marked. When Ibni Abdullah returns to Arabia for one month, the narrator too wishes to go. Her desire for such an exotic crossing of borders is in stark contrast to the women crossing from East to West Berlin... Crossing borders is an effort, is work, and the narrator entertains the Oskar Matzerath-like fantasy of returning to a place that is secure and enclosed. (167-8)

The narrator realizes that Arabic does not belong to her or define who she is any more than Turkish or German, which could equally be perceived as the language(s) of the other. To the extent that language is inseparable from "I," it "is also the experience of expropriation, of an irreducible *exappropriation*. What is called the 'mother' tongue is already 'the other's language'" (*Of Hospitality* 89). Thus, the voluntary subjugation to the grandfather tongue and culture does not necessarily lead the narrator to her "origins," but only to one culture among many. She remains equally detached from all the languages and the cultures enveloped by these idioms. The narrator overcomes her initial temptation to return to a secure place unscathed by the hardship involved in her migration to and diasporic existence in Germany.

Özdamar's narrator does not fit the behavioral pattern of most Turkish German women, who "turn into authentic subjects with experiences of patriarchal subjugation, native informants who 'finally' (and rather simplistically) claim their own stories in their own voices by writing (graphing) their selves (auto)" (Mani 95). She does not suddenly find liberation in either German or modern Turkish culture following a voluntary exile in Arabic; Arabic is not contrasted to Turkish and German as an inferior or a superior language or culture. In place of a hierarchy of languages and cultures, we see instead how the narrator enjoys experimenting, sliding in and out of languages and roles in an impressionistic narrative, participating in and remaining detached from all the cultural references available to her. Özdamar critiques the search for a pure, homogeneous, and enclosed origin that can be easily recovered by the diasporic imagination and that would save the narrator the effort of crossing borders.

As the story ends, the narrator does recover certain Turkish words' childhood in Arabic as she initially hoped to, but her engagement with the Arabic culture stops short of a total identification. Toward the end of the story we find her saying: "I wanted to go back to my grandfather so that I could find the way to my mother and to my mother tongue. I had fallen in love with my grandfather" (*MT* 54). Her initial nostalgic attempt to find her grandfather's language is given a different twist near the end of the story when she goes to a park and sits next to a girl who is crying and telling the narrator the suicide of her boyfriend Thomas: "When he was still alive, he often went to his Granny, cleaned up there, in Grandfather's room, like a servant, he rummaged around quite a bit, looking for something" (*MT* 57). The boy's return to his grandfather's house is associated with an obsessive return to a mythical place of origin that ends up in servitude and self-destruction. Through the boy's suicide, Özdamar suggests that the nostalgia for a pure, originary moment/context is an important narrative that must be examined.

When the girl asks the narrator what she is doing in Germany, the narrator replies: “I’m a word collector” (MT 57). Right then, the narrator is struck by the remembrance of another word in her mother tongue: “*Ruh* in Turkish, like *Ruhe*, ‘peace and quiet’ in German—‘*Ruh* means soul’, I said to the girl. ‘Soul means *Ruh*’, she said” (MT 57). Initially after leaving Ibni Abdullah’s room, the narrator had noted: “When I stood for the first time before Ibni Abdullah’s door, I had three words from my mother tongue. ‘To see’, ‘to experience life’s accidents’, and ‘workers’” (MT 54). The fact that the fourth word which she recalls from her mother tongue is recollected in relation to her step-mother tongue of German rather than her grandfather’s language of Arabic leaves the reader wondering about the hierarchy and the primacy of the languages available to the narrator.

The more she strives to return to her grandfather tongue in a circular movement, the more the narrator moves down a spiral of other languages, geographies, and roles. The very attempt to return to her origins brings her in an elliptical line to the German language, the only language she considers foreign to her body. The narrator’s refusal to commit to a single identity, whether national, cultural, or linguistic, can be construed as a story of empowerment. This empowerment occurs as the narrator re-configures her understanding of Arabic, Turkish, and German languages and histories; she keeps a critical distance from each.

Finally the nostalgia felt toward a designated “origin” leads the narrator back to the ambiguous but productive tensions embodied by diasporic communities, whose members are transnational agents who bear the traces of disjunctive histories without reconciling them into homogeneous, monologic identities. If culture is memory, then the narrator’s joint effort to remember the childhood of Turkish words in Arabic such as “*Leb-Mouth / Ducar-To Befall / Mazi-Past*” (MT 54), and her recognition of the resemblance between certain Turkish words and

German ones (“*Ruh/Ruhe*”) show us her ability to accommodate cross-cultural genealogies through interwoven languages.

3.2.2. The Law of Genre: Exile and Form

As in “Mother Tongue” and “Grandfather Tongue,” Özdamar in her third story “Karagöz in Alamania” engages the short story format, but reflects heavy influences from theatre and poetry. This cross-generic style of her writing gives rise to a non-linear structure, where the primacy of the role is given over to impressionistic and metaphoric narrative rather than to exposition and reflection. I will discuss the generic complexity of Özdamar’s stories to better understand the role of narratorial experimentation and cross-genre writing on the re-configurations of exilic and transnational subjectivities.

Özdamar’s short stories are marked by generic, linguistic, and temporal entanglements. What strikes the reader in the first place is the “sensual immediacy” (Bird 184) to the manner in which Özdamar recollects her impressions of people, events and places. She combines several episodes, showing no attempt to link them together, or to ease the reader into the story by offering explicative transitional paragraphs. As she montages divided scenes, “the immediacy of the text is enhanced by a framework structure of rapid and constant switching of scenes, reminiscent of the theatre” (Bird 185). As the scenes switch, the story easily moves from a dialogue taking place in the present moment to an encounter or conversation that occurred in the past. These temporal entanglements, enacted through a constant re-positioning of one’s self in the present moment in relation to the ways in which the past is remembered, also enable the narrator to re-formulate their understanding of personal as well as national histories. In other words, both the present and the past are re-configured in relation to one another. Neither the present moment nor the re-membered history remains stable. “In combination, with the impressionistic and episodic mode of representation, the ‘I’ of the narrating self becomes definable predominantly in

relation to the immediate events that she describes,” (Bird 215) thus embodying an exilic subjectivity in a state of perpetual shifts. Committed neither to a fixed origin to return to, nor a point of arrival, the narrator crosses temporal borders, as well as the boundaries between languages, to demonstrate the exilic condition, whose historical and social coordinates remain in flux. The entanglement of different times—past, present, and future—negotiates a kind of continuity marked by ruptures, which enables transnational agents to gather a *bricolage* of histories and cultural practices. As Özdamar writes,

[o]n the one hand, you have the experience of your everyday existence in the new land, which is long and drawn out but has gaps in it; on the other hand, you have sudden memories of the land you came from. But the whole thing runs like a simultaneous film in which images and yearnings merge without any gaps. When the two come together in this way, it makes for a beautiful encounter. (Horrocks, “Living” 54)

These temporal border-crossings also call into play linguistic entanglements. Just as the experience of the past and the present merge, and run like a simultaneous film, so do the languages associated with these different temporal dimensions begin to merge. For example, as the narrator in “Grandfather Tongue” oscillates between the memories of a distant past, the years spent in Turkey, and her immediate environment in Germany, she blends several Turkish words into German sentences, particularly when those Turkish words do not have a corresponding word in German such as “hodsha,” “ezan,” and “maşallah” (MT 59). When one language ceases to articulate her experience, she turns to another, and changes codes in order to “illuminate the exigencies of survival and sustenance in a language (German) that belies naturalness and, therefore, must be naturalized” (Mani 101). As Seyhan notes, despite the fact native speakers often perceive “code mixing and switching as a sign of inadequate language skills of foreign speakers, multilingual speakers frequently mix and switch codes in order to express a broad range of nuance and inflection in their speech” (*Writing* 109).

Within this translangual space of Özdamar's language, we also encounter a trans-generic narrative. She uses a mixture of different speech types and genres. Her stories combine "not only words but also noncoincidental units of speech, proverb with verb, Koranic recitation with Persian miniature, a whole belief system with a song" (Seyhan, *Writing* 109). The fusing of different national languages and genres create an alienation effect for both the Turkish and German readers, who face the challenge of re-appropriating the de-contextualized linguistic units that gain different meanings through unexpected pairings (German/Turkish, Koran/popular song etc.). By this account, if "language is hospitality," (*Of Hospitality* 135) then Özdamar's language gives the reader the possibility of "saying 'I am me' in someone else's language, and in my own language, 'I am other'" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 315). Özdamar invokes new contexts for language, reminding us of the structural limitations of our possession of language. Such an approach to language and the person using it will be of utmost importance to Derrida in *Monolingualism* as well. Özdamar, much like Derrida, refutes the notion of a transparent self, which can be accessed unmediated through language. New subjectivities are invented through the re-contextualized rituals of language.

Rather than growing attached to a single national, ethnic, linguistic identity, the transnational subject experiments with the "irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic" (*Dissemination* 221). The result is an indeterminate drifting of meaning, which adds a playful quality to the ways in which the narrator experiences and experiments with her immediate environment. This is the reason why the narrator of "Grandfather Tongue" does not experience Islam as restrictive, or liberating, while figuratively returning to pre-republican Turkey in search of her grandfather and mother tongues. She moves from a hierarchical to a hybrid understanding of the broad range of choices available to her in the process of self-making.

In comparison with Kadife from *Snow*, for example, Özdamar's narrator in "Grandfather Tongue" is more confident and playful. Kadife has less fluidity in her personality; she represents the typical female character under patriarchal subjugation, who wears the headscarf to rebel against the objectification of women in the capitalist society (the implication is that the headscarf may bring her more freedom), but then she does exactly the opposite and unveils herself to gain freedom from the pressure of other roles. However, even as she rebels, she moves within established norms, and uses the symbols imposed on her by the male figures in her life. Özdamar's narrator, however, diverts from the symbolic space fulfilled by the archetypal minority female autobiographer, who overcomes patriarchal oppression by restoring a kind of self-realization or self-fulfillment.

By contrast to the examples of fully-formed selves represented in the anamnestic outlines akin to the *Bildungsroman*, the autobiographical desire expressed in "Grandfather Tongue" is an expression of the ever-shifting selfhood in exile. In place of a transparent model of identification, the narrator inhabits a narrative in progress, where "the present is something transitory, it is flow, it is an eternal continuation without beginning or end, it is denied an authentic conclusiveness and consequently lacks an essence as well" (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 20). The transitory nature of the exilic condition, however, does not translate into a free-floating agency. Özdamar asserts "identity as culturally hybrid and unstable, but at the same time historically located, embodied, and gendered" (Haines and Littler 138).

Özdamar's relationship to language is highly metaphoric, but not in the sense that metaphor is conventionally understood. As Derrida observes in "White Mythology," "metaphor has always been defined as the trope of resemblance; not simply as the resemblance between a signifier and a signified but as the resemblance between two signs, one of which designates the other" (215). Derrida asserts that this is the onomatism of the Aristotelian ideal.

The definition of metaphor is in its place in the *Poetics*, which opens as a treatise on *mimēsis*... The condition for metaphor (for good and true metaphor) is the condition for truth... *Mimēsis* thus determined belongs to *logos*... and is tied to the possibility of meaning and truth in discourse. (237)

Derrida furthermore argues that Aristotle's definition of mimesis as a quality proper to man creates a "constitutive gesture of metaphysics and of humanism [that] is a teleological determination: naturality in general says itself, reassembles itself, knows itself, appears to itself, reflects itself, and 'mimics' itself par excellence" (237). Metaphor, from Aristotle's *eidos* to Hegel's dialectic idealism, is attributed this power of truth and knowledge.

By contrast, in Özdamar's work, metaphor serves a different purpose. Rather than serving as a figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something to suggest a similarity, metaphor in Özdamar's storytelling creates a division, or a kind of alienation effect, by postponing the moment of reconciliation between the metaphor and its signified. Özdamar interrupts the specular circle of metaphor, and generates a condition of simultaneous appropriation and expropriation. Her position shows that language is by its nature exilic, and final meaning contingent. As Derrida writes, "name is no longer the proper name of a unique thing which metaphor would *overtake*; it already has begun to say the multiple, divided origin of all seed, of the eye, of invisibility, death, the father, the 'proper name', etc." ("White Myth" 244). The field of division opened by metaphor invites us to re-evaluate the perspectives that have become too familiar within the culture we inhabit, and opens a venue for the creative possibilities and potentials of language in shaping the way we interact with one another.

Additionally, Özdamar's use of language and metaphor can be seen as following a Brechtian strategy. Brecht sought to "historicise and negate the commonplace and taken-for-granted, to prise open social and ideological contradictions, and to both demonstrate and provoke an awareness of the individual's place in a concrete social narrative" (Dickson 186). His goal was

“to reveal the workings of ideology... [by] stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them” (Dickson 191). His goal was to take the *natural* into a surprising, illuminating, and disillusioning new level of understanding—*Verfremdung*, “making strange” (Dickinson 192). In a similar manner, Özdamar uses metaphor in translation to surprise the reader and to take them to a new level of understanding of the relationship between language and identity.

She often appeals to Turkish metaphors and proverbs literally translated into German: “Death is a black camel” (MT 19); “the eye of a needle” (MT 19); “tongueless letters” (MT 28). In “Grandfather Tongue,” the narrator recalls some of the proverbs she heard from her father and grandfather such as “the hand of the beating master will come from paradise” (MT 17) or “there where you hit, roses will bloom” (MT 18). Similarly, in the beginning of “Karagöz in Alamania,” there is a whole dialogue between an apple tree owner and Karagöz’s father that is based on Turkish proverbs literally translated into German: “Whoever does not walk around the mill, will not fall into the grain” (MT 61); “where there is a house there is also a neighbor” (MT 60); “one word follows another” (MT 61). As the expressions of a displaced culture are gathered in the language of another, the result is a translation process, which defies its own translatability but leads to creative explorations anyway. Through puzzling literal transferences of the idiom of one language to another, Özdamar draws on a kind of poetics that underlines the importance of penetrating the linguistic medium of different cultures. As Ian Chambers writes in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, “the familiar, the taken for granted, is turned around, acquires an unsuspected twist, and, in becoming temporarily unfamiliar, produces an unexpected, sometimes magical, space” (16). Özdamar creates an alienation effect for both the Turkish readers (who must trace the familiar proverb in the unfamiliar German language) and the German readers (who must decipher the unfamiliar proverb from a different culture in the familiar mother tongue). Both a

translation of the unknown to the known, and a translation of the known to the unknown, language, and by extension, metaphor, plays a dual role in Özdamar's work.

Additionally, the alienation effect in Özdamar's narrative reveals the metaphoricity of all narratives, including the unified narratives of nationhood, whereby the assumption is that there is *one history* to write and *one* transparent *language* to give form to it. The reductive relationship between experience, remembrance and language found in official historical documentations is challenged by Özdamar who points to the fact that there is no neutral language devoid of ideological content and authorial intentions. There is no direct speaking; there are only infinite ways of perceiving and speaking/writing about an event. Metaphor plays a very important role in extending language and pushing the limitations of meaning-making and narrative construction. If we recognize the metaphoricity of language, we can be open to the infinite interpretive possibilities available to us through the use of metaphors, and not just accept the ones offered to us. To pursue this line of thinking, we can conclude that even those most intact narratives, which assume a mastery of language and of the history shaped through that language, are but ambivalent articulations that have forgotten their own transiency. As Ricoeur states, "wherever metaphor fades, there the metaphysical concept rises up" (286). This transition from the metaphoric to the metaphysical marks the moment of amnesia, when several histories are forgotten, dismissed, repressed.

Özdamar reminds us of the dialogic possibilities concealed in language by moving in and out of uncommon combinations of diverse languages and idioms. Her playful transfigurations of the dialogic encounter between languages, genres, and cultural terms represent a crossing of national as well as personal boundaries. In the anticipation of the indefinite variety of combinations present in language and self-narrative, Özdamar does not settle on an intact national and linguistic identity, or a culture of origin symbolized through the mother tongue, but

calls *the familiar* into question. Her stylistic strategies engage the reader in a creative resistance against the forgetting of alternative histories and identities. She conceives of “metaphor as the deviation in naming,” (Ricoeur 66) and “as the construction of the network of interactions” (Ricoeur 98). Through these interactions enabled through the creative possibilities of language, Özdamar resists the oblivion of collective memory and of the oftentimes exclusive and reductive official historical records. Through an acknowledgement of the historical formations of language, she disturbs the way we habitually think of national identity, as well as gender roles.

In this respect, language has more in common with excess than economy in relation to the way it gives shape to memory. Özdamar’s metaphoric narrative enables us to become aware of the multiple paths that language and memory can lead us down. If there are many ways of remembering and articulating our experience, then there is a fine line dividing the “semi-fictional” communal storytelling and the “semi-factual” official historical accounts. Özdamar exposes the semi-fictional/semi-factual aspect of all narratives, reminding us of Bhabha’s remark that,

[n]ations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind’s eye. Such an image of the nation—or narration—might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. (“Introduction” 1)

In order to convey the transient nature of the narratives that have become harbours of truth through the myths of time, Özdamar resorts to the long forgotten oral traditions and rich metaphors of the Turkish language. Unlike the testimonies one comes across in official, written documents, oral traditions of storytelling—passed on from generation to generation—retain both the losses and the immediacies experienced by the communities over time. In other words, oral tradition is highly metaphoric. “The dictionary contains no metaphors; they exist only in discourse. For this reason, metaphorical attribution is superior to every other use of language in

showing what ‘living speech’ really is; it is an ‘instance of discourse’ *par excellence*” (Ricoeur 97). It is this living speech visible in Özdamar’s impressionistic narrative that disturbs the notion of stable identity, by cautioning us against the amnesia embedded in lexical forms of language. Özdamar invents a language that articulates the urgencies, which constitute unrecorded personal histories. To borrow Seyhan’s words, “image, metaphor, and metonym re-member bodies of language, culture, and their inhabitants dismembered by imperialism, war, conquest, colonization, poverty, and violence. They not only restore them to memory but also invest them with a kind of material reality” (*Writing* 121). Through a materialization of the lost culture in language, Özdamar resists oblivion, and allows room for alternative histories that otherwise remain underrepresented.

As Bakhtin remarks, language accommodates “the socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form” (*Dialogic* 291). Özdamar uses language for prising open social strata and cultural memory embodied in a variety of idioms to foreground the potential paths we can follow in language. The narratives we generate lend a context to our experiences. *Mother Tongue*’s novelty lies in the fact that it designates language, particularly in exilic narratives, as a creative space where “it is through metaphor and its extended fictions that form can be imposed or new possibilities of conceiving of the self created” (Bird 215). While her stories articulate the experience of the migrant populations, who abandon their native land, Özdamar also expresses a condition of expropriation and abandonment in language, a “figurative” migration. A renewed sense of self achieved through mobility is reflected in the re-embodied nuances of living speech preserved through an active memory.

3.3 Karagöz in Alamania

3.3.1 Translingual Play and Social Satire

Özdamar's foregrounding of the multilinguistic and multicultural social interactions that occur between the Turkish diaspora and German society takes issue with nationalist identities and universalist transgressions of national identity, both of which neglect or elide the latent political and cultural relations to be generated through transnational living. This simultaneous participation in and detachment from the collective myths of nationhood both in Turkey and in Germany, which she demonstrates in poignant terms through the narrator of "Mother Tongue" and "Grandfather Tongue," takes a comic and satirical twist in another story, "Karagöz in Alamania" ("*Alamania*" is the pronunciation of "Germany" in Turkish-German vernacular). Özdamar does not only dwell on memory and nostalgia; her critical and satirical bent comes across in this third story from the collection, where she invokes social satire to develop the critical double consciousness.

Like the narrator of "Mother Tongue" and "Grandfather Tongue" who crosses from East to West Germany to take Arabic lessons, and whose daily journey becomes an allegory of her passage from modern to pre-reformation Turkey, the Karagöz story also invites the reader to cross borders relentlessly, along with the characters moving from East to West Turkey, and from Turkey to Germany. "Karagöz in Alamania" focuses on the tragi-comic border trauma familiar to the Turkish guest workers in Germany, who were recruited when their service was needed and displaced when their purpose was fulfilled. In an interview with Annette Wierschke, Özdamar recounts the writing process of her third story. She recalls sitting in a train with *Gastarbeiter* of different nationalities, whose only common language was German, which all of them spoke with flaws. Özdamar remarks that she was growing to appreciate these mistakes very much:

I noticed that it's really a new language that is spoken by about five million *Gastarbeiter* and that these mistakes we make in German are our identity. And so I used just these mistakes as an art form and played with them... That these mistakes should pop up and make life a bit difficult for the reader means you can relate more closely to the difficulties of the character. (Bird 159-160)

With this purpose in mind, Özdamar writes "Karagöz in Alamania" in broken German, and notes that the story was inspired by a letter she received from a Turkish worker in Germany. The Turkish worker had lost much of his Turkish; "his mother tongue had become entangled with his newly acquired German, and now not even his wife could understand him without difficulty. But this man never spoke out against Germany. He kept repeating, *Home is where you have a job*" (Tan and Waldhoff 156). The flawed and entangled language of the worker constitutes the inner structure of this third story in the collection. Originally written as a play in 1982 and staged at the *Frankfurter Schauspielhaus* in 1986, the protagonist of the story is Karagöz, a farmer who travels to Germany as a worker with his wise, talking donkey.

Several characters that we encounter in this story speak like the Turkish worker Özdamar mentions above, and like the narrator of "Mother Tongue" who claims to have lost her mother tongue in Germany. These characters speak German, but insert Turkish words and expressions in their sentences. As Tan and Waldhoff write, what we find is a mixed language "in which either Turkish or German is the dominant component... Many, for instance, who are fluent in German switch to Turkish when it comes to counting... Such code-switching may occur during a conversation, sometimes even in mid-sentence" (Horrocks, *Turkish* 145). A good example of this can be found in the Karagöz story, where a group of Turkish guest workers are waiting at the train station in Germany:

The Turks spoke in their language with German words mixed in, words for which they had no others in Turkish: employment office, tax office, income-tax card, vocational school. A *Gastarbeiter*, standing there, said:
"Sonra interpreter geldi. Foremanle konuştu. Bu income tax kaybetmiş dedi. Tax office çok fena dedi. Income tax yok. Bombok. Child allowance falan alamazsın." (MT 96)

As we see in this passage, sometime code-switching occurs within the same word. For example, the suffix “-le” at the end of the word “*Foremanle*” means “with” in Turkish, and “konuşmak” means to speak. “*Foremanle konuştu*” translates as “he spoke to the Foreman.” To borrow Seyhan’s words, “not only do German words blend into the grammatical structure of Turkish, but they are also made to conform to Turkish vowel harmony, which is a morphophonemic rule” (*Writing* 109). This constant blending and jumping from one language to another may be frustrating for many readers, but that is a conscious motive. Özdamar’s blending of different languages and speech forms, as she explains in an interview held with Horrocks and Kolinsky titled “Living and Writing in Germany,” is a strategy for retaining “some ‘mistakes’ in the book’s language,” which invite the readers “to experience for themselves the process the writer has undergone linguistically” (49). As Bird remarks, “just as the image of tripping over the mistakes in the text is a physical one, and just as such mistakes can jar almost physically upon the reader, so too the relationship of identity and language is not a theoretical one, but one that is located in the body” (160).

Yet, Özdamar also wants to emphasize that while code-switching is at times a symptom of the difficulty of translation, both linguistically and culturally, other times it is an indication of empowerment. As she remarks, this manner of speaking is “devoid of clichés, and... [comes] out almost like poetry” (Horrocks, “Living” 47). To borrow the words of Tan and Waldhoff, bilinguals see code-switching “as an additional freedom of choice, enabling them to say what they intend to all the more precisely. Speakers who switch code have an increased capacity for expressing the fine nuances of language, and are better able to cross linguistic, cultural, logical, and emotional boundaries” (Horrocks, *Turkish* 145). In this respect, code-switching enables speakers to make use of the broad range of linguistic possibilities available to them in expressing a wide range of emotions across two or more languages.

Before I begin to discuss how this translingualism takes the form of social satire in the Karagöz story, where the farmer Karagöz embarks upon this journey from his village to Germany, it is important to note a key intertextual allusion: Karagöz (literally “Blackeye”) is also the name of one of the characters in a famous set of Turkish shadow plays, entitled *Karagöz and Hacivat*. In *The Turkish Shadow Theatre and the Puppet Collection of the L. A. Mayer Memorial Foundation*, Andreas Tietze informs us that the Turkish shadow play is called *hayal*, a phantasm, and the puppeteer is *hayali*, an illusionist (14). It has a transitory nature and does not wish to imitate reality, because in the Islamic aversion of reproducing reality, trying to imitate God’s creation would be a blasphemy and a sin (13). Traditionally performed during Ramadan, the shadow play is conducted and passed on as an oral art form. The play is based on the dialogue between the two principal characters, Karagöz and Hacivat who are two neighbours meeting in the street between their houses and quarrelling. Karagöz represents the common Turkish people stripped of exterior gloss; he seems to be very naive, simple and crude, but possesses in reality great natural wit and cunning. He laughs and jokes with everyone. As Nicholas N. Martinovitch writes in *The Turkish Theater*,

[i]n most cases, thanks to his seeming naivety, he [Karagöz] has a narrow escape from danger, and at the end, makes a fool of everybody. Hadjeivat [also spelled as Hacivat/Hajivat] is a complete contrast to Karagöz. He is “efendi” or the somewhat Europeanized Turk who has mistakenly acquired a smattering of the Turkish “culture.” He therefore speaks affectedly and pretentiously, with quantities of Arabism... [which] conveys a certain kind of false elegance. (41-42)

Hacivat is educated, cunning, insincere, and often shows a paternalistic attitude toward Karagöz who is poor, lazy, and impudent. The latter speaks in the vernacular, refers to himself as Gypsy; he is greedy, malicious, sincere, and clownish (Tietze 24). “The comical effect lies in the confrontation of their two levels of speech, and in the hilarious misunderstandings and distortions that Hajivat’s terms undergo in Karagöz’s mouth” (Tietze 25). Because Hacivat’s cultivated

phrases are incomprehensible to Karagöz, the latter often finds himself mocking his neighbour through imitation and piling on him many crude indecencies and puns in which the Turkish language is exceedingly rich.

The shadow play typically begins with a prologue, and recitation of a “poem of the curtain,” followed by Dialogue (*Muhavere*), Play (*Fasil*), and Epilogue. Often, in the epilogue, Hacıvat leaves as Karagöz “pronounces the closing formula of the play, an apology to the audience for all ‘slips of the tongue’, and then promises Hacıvat more whacks in tomorrow’s... (title of another play)” (Tietze 27-28). These parodies, which include not only immoral and improper elements, but also numerous esthetic and spiritual bits of poetry, Sufic ideas, and quotations from the Koran (Martinovitch 36), are difficult to translate as the misunderstandings between the refined tongue of Hacıvat and the vulgar tongue of Karagöz take place on a linguistic level.

There is a long tradition of social and political satire invoked in the slippery grounds of communication between Karagöz and Hacıvat. Martinovitch reminds us that due to the valuable social critique invoked by this shadow theatre, “in the Turkish revolution of 1908, the satirico-political magazine was published under the title of *Karagöz*” (37). Hence, the recontextualization of the *Karagöz* character as a Turkish guest-worker who travels back and forth between Turkey and Germany provides Özdamar with the perfectly “comic performance of the border trauma of Turkish workers who are admitted to Germany when Germany requires a larger labor force but are deported, detained, and persecuted when their services are no longer needed” (Seyhan, *Writing* 101). In Özdamar’s story, Karagöz is a farmer who lives in a small village with his wife and kids. Encouraged by his uncle and the neighbouring money lender/owner of the apple tree to go to Alania as a guest worker, the farmer leaves the village with his talking donkey, who “once worked as a carrier and a vehicle for transportation in his native village. Now he retrains

himself as a chronicler, philosopher, and parodist, tries to comfort the impoverished workers with the words of Karl Marx” (*Writing* 101). The story chronicles their adventures on the way to Alania as well as their repeated border crossing between Turkey and Germany.

Like the workers Özdamar remarks having encountered during a train journey, the characters in this story speak to each other blending Turkish words into German. As in *Karagöz and Hacivat* plays, however, most of the communication in *Karagöz in Alania* is based on indirect expressions and Turkish proverbs. At the beginning of the story, we encounter the dialogue between the owner of the apple tree and the farmer’s father.

The owner of the apple tree wanted to buy the farmer from the old man and make him his slave. Both spoke about this matter indirectly, in proverbs... “Last year I found a louse on my collar, I have left it where it was for Allah. It is still starving today.” He meant that he was so poor that his clothes could not even feed a louse. The owner of the apple tree said: “See here, where there is a house, there is also a neighbour. See here, if a human did not need other humans, Allah would not have placed us all on the same mountain.” (*MT* 60-1)

As we can see in this passage, while providing a literal translation of the Turkish proverbs, Özdamar does not always explain these riddles for the reader. By inserting the Turkish idioms/proverbs in her narrative, she purposefully creates an alienation effect for the reader unfamiliar with Turkish language and oral traditions. The dialogue between the owner of the apple tree and the farmer’s father takes the form of a rhetorical battle. The tree owner persuades the rather naïve father figure to give his land in the exchange for the pocket money the owner will give to the farmer to travel to Germany. In an attempt to persuade the old man, the owner appeals to rhetorical conceits:

“... [D]o you know what Alania is, Mr. Ahmed?” Then he told the father about that country. If he sent his son there from up in the tree, then he would not have just one son, but twenty-five sons all at once because in that foreign country money is worth twenty-five times more than here in the village. He said: “One mark makes twenty-five Turkish lira. One son makes 25 sons. One son makes twenty-five fields.” The father asked him: “What do you want?” The money-lender said: “Your field and your son get money, so that a hero will go to Germany and he will soon make twenty-five fields for you.” (*MT* 62)

This initial dialogue between them is reminiscent of the kind of verbal exchange that takes place in *Karagöz and Hacivat*. In the shadow theatre, often “Karagöz meets Hadjeivat and they discuss how, by means of some business or trade, or merely through cunning, they may obtain money... Various types of Stambul population appear in turn: the Armenian, the Arnaut, the Jew, the Greek, and so on... They all try to cheat Karagöz at the moment of payment” (Martinovitch 44). Although the farmer in Özdamar’s story is not surrounded by different ethnic populations, there is certainly a number of eccentric and highly dramatic characters he meets along his journey, from a treasure hunter, to whom Karagöz promises to “bring a machine back from the rich, foreign country” (MT 65) to help him chase his treasures, to a lion carrying a plastic bag. These characters seem to be inserted in the story both as an omen of what possibly awaits Karagöz in his quest, and as witness accounts of a population leading difficult lives as a result of economic hardship.

The expectations and hopes of the migrants Karagöz encounters in the story are fairly stereotypical. Embarking upon long journeys without knowing what is in store for them, many of the Turks on their way to a more “prosperous” life in Germany go through similar experiences. When asked in an interview whether she thinks that she may at times be running the risk of enforcing the prejudices of some German readers through the use of such stereotypical images, Özdamar responds by saying “that kind of thing really happens! It is reality” (Horrocks, “Living” 50). Even though certain national stereotypes constitute part of Özdamar’s narrative, she always treats them satirically to demonstrate both their currency and their limitations to open a venue for a more profound understanding of the predominant stereotypes.

The use of crude stereotypes demonstrates that the nation always lurks in the background, in the form of scattered and re-imagined landscapes of memory. This resonates with Homi Bhabha’s remark in “DissemiNation,” that one cannot speak “of the pleasures of exile... without

realizing how fully the shadow of the nation falls on the condition of exile” (292). Despite this abiding connection to the nation, Özdamar also confounds readers’ expectations of national and cultural identity by making these seemingly stereotypical characters act and speak in surprising ways. Seen from this perspective, her characters are both stereotypical and unconventional; both familiar and uncanny. Özdamar appeals to national and cultural stereotypes to remain critical of the hierarchy constitutive of the nationalist archetypes in both German and Turkish cultures. She both acknowledges the inevitability of cultural stereotypes, and stresses the need to move beyond such prescribed images.

Additionally, there are dramatic passages in the story addressing the Turkish migrants, warning them about their own stereotypical position, by hinting at what the future holds for them. For example, Karagöz meets a lion on his way, who is speaking to a plastic bag. The lion speaks in a Greek chorus-like fashion, as if reciting lines in a tragic play, to foretell the future and to warn those around him:

“You sad, rash fool, farewell
I took you for something better! Take
your fate.
You see, too much diligence can be dangerous” (MT 69).

The dramatic passage recited by the lion (“You sad, rash fool...”) is an excerpt from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*; it is addressed to the Queen by Hamlet: “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! / I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune; / Thou find’st to be too busy is some danger” (Complete Works/Gramercy 1095). I previously mentioned that Özdamar’s ideas about theatre are reflected directly in her language. For Özdamar, it is almost as if words have bodies because of her background in theatre, which couples physical movement and linguistic expression to the extent that they enmesh. For example, in “Grandfather Tongue,” after Ibni Abdullah leaves the room, the narrator breathes out

a long “ooof”; and her “voice goes and strikes a long Japanese branch standing in a vase” (*MT* 27). As Haines and Littler observe, in this scene “the letters that come out of her mouth are signifiers detached from their signifieds, and they are visual as well as aural images, foregrounding the pictorial aspect of Arabic script” (125). There is a similar ironic gap between the signifier and the signified in this scene in the Karagöz story, where the Hamlet quote is detached from the originary text/moment. Dramatic lines are reproduced through memorialisation and utterance, but they are carried to a completely different context. The decontextualization of these expressions assigns them new meanings as new circumstances arise. There can be as many signifieds as the circumstances in which a linguistic unit is re-cycled and attributed new meanings. As I stated in my discussion of Özdamar’s metaphoric uses of language in the first two stories, this inherent delay of a finalized meaning underlines the creative potentials of language.¹⁴

In the context of Özdamar’s story, the dramatic lines convey a message about the losses and failures experienced by Turkish immigrants on the way to Germany. After the lion concludes his speech, we find out that there is a man in the plastic bag “of whom only the bones and 20 *groschen* were left” (*MT* 69). It is then that one gravestone takes a drink from the *rakı* bottle and begins to explain:

“Allow me. I have heard about this from Osman, the city park watchman. The bones are called Memet Turgut. He was waiting for an answer about whether he could go to work in Libya. The answer took a long time. He was so tired, so tired that as he was looking for a place to sleep, he didn’t notice that he’d stepped into the lions’ garden. In the morning, the

¹⁴ The lion’s use of Hamlet’s quote recalls the narrator of *The Bridge of the Golden Horn*, who learns German by memorizing plays and newspaper headlines. When her mother asks her a question in Turkish, she answers with quotes from plays in German. This creates a funny effect as it makes it impossible for her mother to carry on a conversation with her. The narrator’s expressions do not take the form of a coherent dialogue, but episodic, disparate segments. Because she does not learn the word by seeing what it corresponds to, and does not necessarily know the meaning of the full phrases she picks up from the newspapers and plays, her speech ceases to be a transparent method that transfers information to and from the consciousness, an activity aimed to grasp the essence of things. It is more of a poetic exercise, whereby she experiments with role-playing. Özdamar’s non-linear enactment of poetic/dramatic lines inspired after Brecht’s theatre can be seen in contrast to the Aristotelian mimetic theatre with linear narrative, time and place unity.

lions ate him..." [the second gravestone interrupts] "But listen carefully: either he eats himself. Or, on the other hand, if the lion comes up to him and eats him, then he does not eat himself." (MT 70-1)

The farmer and his donkey encounter similar stories about failed attempts to cross borders during their journey to reach Istanbul. Their journey begins in an anonymous village, and the first point of destination they reach in their visit to the prosperous West is Istanbul.

As in Pamuk's *Snow*, in this story too we find a juxtaposition of cities. The story in *Snow* revolves around the triangular journey of Ka between Kars-Istanbul-Frankfurt, contrasting Kars to Istanbul, and Istanbul to Frankfurt in order to convey the relativity of the distance opened up between a symbolic East and a symbolic West. In the Karagöz story, we find a gradual movement from the anonymous village to Istanbul, then from Istanbul to the Turkish-German border, and finally to Germany. The trespassing of borders represents what Özdamar calls "leaps in time... between Malatya and Istanbul, between Turkey and Germany, between East and West Berlin" (Horrocks, "Living" 53). As the farmer and his donkey leap in time and slowly approach the West, at each step they encounter mythical stories of those who have trodden the path to a richer life. Özdamar gives a certain sense of epic quality when depicting the long journey to the West as she conjoins the narrative pieces with the couplet "IT GREW DARK. IT GREW LIGHT" (MT 71). Echoing Brechtian montage, this couplet is inserted to the text to mark the passing of days and nights as the farmer abruptly moves from one encounter to another with several theatrical characters.

Eventually, when he and the donkey reach Istanbul, the farmer looks for a relative from his village to spend the night with him.

The relative was in the process of building an illegal slum tenement. These houses were called "night-arrivals," *Gecekondu*, which means that they had to be built in one night, for if people were already living in them with a few beds, then perhaps the police would not destroy them. The relative asked the farmer what wind had brought him to Istanbul. The farmer was very tired. The donkey answered: "Didn't you hear? It rains pearls in Germany.

One of those pearls rained into Uncle's ear and the farmer is going to Germany to collect more." The donkey and the farmer fell into bed. Toward morning they awoke—without a roof over their heads, and it was raining dust down on them. The police had flattened half of the house... The village acquaintance began to build another illegal house and said to the farmer: "Bring me a house back from Alamania." (*MT 72-3*)

As the farmer's relatives' image of Germany demonstrates, the story of Karagöz's journey is from the beginning a journey toward wealth. Moving from a rural farming community to the capitalist West in search of improved living conditions, much will be thrown in to disarray in the farmer's life. However, just as the narrator of "Mother Tongue" and "Grandfather Tongue" was not portrayed as the member of a victimized minority in Germany, the farmer in this story is not depicted as yet another victimized villager drowned in the capitalist system either. Karagöz is both witty and naive. He is easy to deceive in some ways as he is not educated or skillful with words, but he is taken down as much by his own ambitions as he is by the difficult circumstances inherent in the host country. Moral lessons aside, the very ambition of obtaining property is one of the main reasons why Karagöz sets out on this journey and becomes unrecognizable with its conclusion.

As we will see in the following examples, Özdamar does not simply call into question the stereotypical images of Turks circulating among the Westerners, but she also remains critical of the myths created by the Turks, who hold on to unrealistic, fable-like narratives, and put themselves into undesirable situations. For example, when the farmer reaches the Turkish-German border, a Turk with golden teeth comes out and tells the crowd waiting by the Door, in broken German, how quickly one can get rich in Alamania. He admits that he earns money from the tent he set up in a park to be used as a toilet. He then turns on a cassette-radio which plays a song:

"Alamania, Alamania
I'm in love with you.
You'll never see

One as stupid as me.” (MT 80)

The lyrics of this song can be read as yet another omen that signals what is about to befall the farmer once he crosses over to Germany and begins to make money. In fact, as soon as he arrives in Germany, Karagöz throws his wife, children, and finally his donkey out of the Door to Germany. At the border, the wife of Karagöz meets several other women whose husbands have all gone mad “because of an Opel Caravan” or “over letting money sleep” (MT 120). Yet, Özdamar resists depicting these socio-economic actors at the heart of the German capitalist system as mere victims. By means of appealing to crude nationalist stereotypes, whose actions and thoughts induce tragi-comic laughter, she enables the reader to become aware of the practical problems without taking sides.

The dream-like images of Germany circulating among the Turks, who leave their villages and risk their families’ lives to migrate to the land where it “rains pearls,” is juxtaposed with the reality they encounter once they arrive in Germany. The Karagöz story testifies to how the Turkish migrants were seen “for four decades in Germany as subjects, if far less frequently as citizens, of a capitalist state committed to certain forms of historical memory” (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 123). Although some of the Turks succeed in improving their economic condition, many others cannot find a place for themselves within the system. As Adelson notes, the “agonal forces of capital and labor are inscribed in the story of Turkish migration, as economic conditions prevailing from the 1950s on attest,” (*Turkish Turn* 123) and these forces are conveyed on a symbolic level in the Karagöz story, where we encounter labourers who are laid off when their workforce is no longer needed. The following example depicts a train full of Turkish workers whose poor conditions are contrasted to the unattainable promise of economic welfare.

The German foreman came and said: “Merry Christmas, this bottle of champagne is a present to you from the company. And a goose, too.” The farmer asked: “Why are you

crying, boss?" The foreman said: "All one hundred men, we have been let go. You go on the dole, I go on the dole... VACATION, CHRISTMAS, O TANNENBAUM
Train station.
Trains leave, trains arrive... The *Gastarbeiter* stand there in their summer suits. It is snowing. (MT 95)

There is a strong contrast between the image of the snow and the summer suits, as well as between the illusion of being sent on vacation and the reality of being laid off. Turkish labourers are depicted as socio-economic subjects "at 'frontier zones' of capitalist development where national domains and a global economy interact" (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 123). Not only are these people laid off and deported against their will, hence remaining subject to economic difficulties within the objectifying capitalist system, but they also encounter cultural and ethnic prejudices when crossing borders and become labelled as "foreign workers."

For example, at one instance in the story titled "Mother Tongue," the narrator recalls sitting in a train travelling to Germany. The reader has been informed earlier in the story that she has been to Germany, for the first time, as a guest worker, but her following visits have been to work as an actress in theatre. As she reaches the Turkish-German border, the narrator feels the anxiety of being exclusively treated like a worker.

Another word in my mother tongue once came to me in a dream. A train travels along, stops, outside they're making arrests, dogs bark, three ticket collectors come, I consider whether I should say, "I am Italian." I want to hide my passport, which lists my profession as *İŞÇİ* (worker). I think, if I can say that I am a student or an artist, I'll get through the inspection. There's a photocopier there as big as a room, it prints a very large self-portrait of me as an *İŞÇİ*. (MT 13)

Despite being a worker, which should denote a profession or vocation, the narrator is anxious about the fact that *worker* in the German context is emblematic of the exclusionary status of *foreigner*, which the immigration bureaucracy (symbolized by the huge photocopier) will capture and magnify into "a very large self portrait" of her identity. In this example, Özdamar acknowledges that national and cultural stereotypes are inevitable, but she stresses the need to

move beyond such prescribed images that represent Turkish people as an undifferentiated mass of foreign workers encroaching upon Germany.

In this scene, there is clearly an underpinning critique of what the American sociologist-economist Saskia Sassen calls the “emblematic status” of migrant laborers (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 123). While recognizing that ethnicity and gender are relevant social referents in stories of migration, Adelson turns to Sassen to argue that we must focus “critical attention on these figural markers as strategic sites where imaginative labor and cultural capital in the literature of migration conspire to transform the meaning of *ethnos* rather than delineating the content of any particular ethnic identity” (126). In the process of what Chow terms “*ethnicization of labor*,” as I previously discussed, ethnicity becomes a mechanism for “producing an internal boundary between what is considered proper and valuable on the one hand, and foreign and inferior on the other ” (Adelson, *Turkish Turn* 133). A look at these boundaries in the context of the example that Özdamar gives helps us understand the power dynamics, which determine the migrant’s experience when crossing national borders, where passport controls continue to be a nightmare for the working class. This example from “Mother Tongue” among others reveals the process by which ethnic and national stereotypes are produced within the objective system of the host culture. Although most of the Turkish labourers in Germany are only offered a limited spectrum of jobs at factories, holding the most undesirable jobs, like the street sweeper or the man with golden teeth who works at a public toilet in the Karagöz story, these jobs come to define who they are.

Yet, Özdamar also critiques the characters who respond to being treated like a commodity by reducing themselves into one and indicting German capitalism for the permanent instability of their lives through self-victimization. Similar to Blue and the Kurdish boy in *Snow*, here we encounter the farmer who overcomes his occasional feeling of guilt for chasing German women

and neglecting his family with “an electrical heater from Germany” (*MT* 111) he places near his wife in a cold evening, as he blames capitalism for everything, including their fading relationship: “‘I know’, he said to his wife, ‘you are not guilty. I think it’s capitalism that’s guilty. We can save ourselves if all the people who have been struck by the hammer of capitalism’ ...” (*MT* 111). Calling out for the necessity of self-criticism, Özdamar provides a double-edged critique, and remains skeptic of the hierarchy constitutive of crude national stereotypes in both host and guest cultures.

3.3.2 Parodic Laughter and Critical Double Consciousness

In addition to social satire, Özdamar critiques the socio-economic injustices experienced by immigrants during the long and difficult border-crossing between Turkey and Germany through the use of humor and laughter as subversive tools. Rather than falling back on a discourse of self-victimization or silence, like Berger’s nameless immigrant, Özdamar uses the figure of the farmer’s Marxist donkey, who acts like the wise clown, to displace the national stereotypes created by both the Westerners and the Turks.

The donkey alludes to the series of folk tales featuring Nasreddin Hoca. Nasreddin Hoca was a populist philosopher famous for his humorous anecdotes, who lived in thirteenth-century Anatolia and also owned a donkey that he used for satirical effect. In Anatolia, the donkey is symbol of endurance against pain, hardship, and hunger. In Özdamar’s story, the donkey is similarly very strong: he patiently survives the beatings of his owner, and makes wise, humorous remarks about the lives of Turks living in Germany. Among the many eccentric characters the reader encounters, the only one who manages to survive the journey with a sense of humour is the farmer’s donkey, who at times is belly-dancing to console the farmer’s homesickness, and other times commenting on the surrounding conditions by quoting Marx. The writer-philosopher-Marxist donkey adds an element of self-criticism to the story of Karagöz. Özdamar’s creative

resistance to the “realistic representation” of the “emblematic Turk” can be traced in this laughter evoked by the wise and clown-like quality of the donkey.

The role played by the donkey recalls Bakhtin’s words in *The Dialogic Imagination*, where he focuses in particular on the clown/rogue/fool figures in literature, and remarks that “the very being of these figures does not have a direct, but rather a metaphorical, significance... [they have] the right to be ‘other’ in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available” (159). Similarly, the subversive quality of the laughter evoked by the donkey spares him from being fully immersed in any one discursive mood, as his metamorphotic nature represents the “metaphorical significance of the entire human image” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 161) in Özdamar’s narrative. The transformative nature of the donkey figure runs parallel to the metaphoric understanding of language. The metaphorical significance embodied by the donkey and the metaphoricity of language emphasized in Özdamar’s narrative both indicate the making of an identity in progress. Instead of growing attached to one particular position, the donkey uses the element of laughter to remain critical of both German and Turkish national stereotypes. The critical look he has on different issues keep him detached from his surroundings in the same manner that the narrator of “Mother Tongue” remains equally detached from her immediate environments through linguistic exile. In other words, while Özdamar uses language as the space of exile in the first two stories to reveal the metaphoricity and the metamorphotic nature of all narratives, here she uses the satirical figure of the donkey and his metamorphotic nature to challenge nationalist stereotypes on both the Turkish and German fronts.

Additionally, in the Karagöz story, Özdamar seeks the folkloric elements, which “alongside direct representation—laughing at living reality... flourish parody and travesty of all high genres and of all lofty models embodied in national myth” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 21). The

language that the donkey uses in responding to the elegantly patronizing statement from the following handbook, which resorts to national stereotypes about Turks, invokes a parody of the seemingly “helpful” remarks made in this document, thus throwing light on the prejudices unleashed upon the *foreigners*: “In Europe, no headshawl is worn. If Turkish woman wears headshawl, Europe not like her. *Gastarbeiter* walk without headshawls. If she wants to wear headshawl, then make it like Europa-woman wear headshawl” (MT 83). Similarly, there is another instance where the donkey reads another patronizing statement from the handbook pertaining to the assumed habits of the Turks:

A Handbook for Gastarbeiter Who Are Going to Work Abroad. It said: “Dear Brother Worker! Toilets in Europe are different than here at home: they are like a chair. Do not stand on top of them, you must sit down on them. For cleanliness, do not use water, leaves, earth or stones, but very fine toilet paper.

The donkey laughed aloud, saying: “Or else someone will lick your arse.” (MT 81)

As these remarks in the handbook manifest, there is a hierarchical relationship between Turkish and German/European cultures that is parodied by the donkey, who casts a sceptical eye on these rules of assimilation by using laughter as a subversive tool. The donkey’s vulgar interference in response to the handbook illustrates that

[i]t is precisely laughter that destroys... any hierarchical... distance... Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out... look into its center, doubt it, take it apart... experiment with it. (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 23)

During his experimentations, the donkey continues to observe some of the discrepancies between Turkish and German cultures, but he breaks away from the hierarchical formula, by keeping a certain sense of irony and detachment.

Most of the observations made by the donkey demonstrate that he takes the double critical stance of the narrator in the first two stories from the collection. He remains critical of both the Turkish and German cultures, rather than replacing the old hierarchical formulas with new ones.

For example, we find him making the following analysis about the way money is perceived in both cultures:

Then he sat down and began to philosophize because he had read a great deal while being an unemployed donkey... smoked a cigarette, a Camel. "Money is smart here, too. It knows where to go: into the wallet. The people hang on to their wallets like onto Holy Scripture... Our people have their money in their trouser pocket... At home, money is tattered, it stinks like a junk dealer, like his long bed-socks, someone may have written a love poem or a telephone number on it." (*MT* 87-8)

Whereas Germany is depicted as a culture of rough exchanges, where "money is smart," Turkish people are portrayed as being careless and poor, but dreamy and humorous in nature. This observation of the donkey may seem to be romanticizing the Turkish culture, but if the reader looks carefully, s/he will acknowledge that, like the narrator in "Grandfather Tongue," the donkey is both critical of the capitalist system in Germany and the repressive political climate in Turkey.

In fact, he comments on the limitations imposed on his freedom in Turkey in reference to the state restrictions brought upon the leftist movement in the 1980s. This was a time when Turkish intellectuals could easily get into trouble for merely possessing books by Marx, or Engels, or any thinker associated with the anti-imperialist movement. Ka from *Snow*, for example, was exiled in this period due to a speculative crime, like many intellectuals with leftist inclinations. Here too, the donkey makes an implicit reference to that period when writing a letter to his German friend Mathias about a dream he had, where he says: "I have to read. The entire past is waiting for me'. There was a toaster and two books came burning out of it" (*MT* 122). The lack of freedom to express one's opinion is embodied in this metaphor (of burned or banned

books during times of political tumult) as well as the farmer's growing impatience with the donkey's Marxist quotes.¹⁵

Further commentary comes from the donkey when he meets an intellectual stationed at the Door to Germany, sitting in a bathtub with a typewriter, interviewing people who walk out of the Door. One of the Turkish youth gives a karate chop to the intellectual and knocks him down, and says: "The empire strikes back. *Goodbye*" (MT 114). Still up for further academic analysis, the intellectual goes on proposing an "*economical-cultural-political*" (MT 115) revaluation of the *Gastarbeiter* suggesting several theoretical maps. The donkey finally calls him a "dreamer" (MT 116), and when the intellectual tells him how no one wants to hear about the *Gastarbeiter*'s poverty, the donkey replies: "Poor people? Perhaps our inner self is very poor. My good friend Don Alfredo once said to a *Gastarbeiter* that he should become a socialist. To which, the other answered: 'Give me 10,000 Deutschmarks and I will oblige you'" (MT 116). The intellectual, like the dandy *frenk* (foreigner) character in European clothes in the *Karagöz and Hacivat* plays, reminds us of Sunay from *Snow*, and echoes the French revolutionary and philosopher Jean Paul Marat who was stabbed in his bathtub by young Charlotte Corday, a Girondist sympathizer (Seyhan, *Writing* 112). As Seyhan notes, this is a "satirical take on the academic investigations of

¹⁵ Inspired by the "Left Movement," (89) Karagöz's donkey resembles the talking crow in Italian filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini's short film, *Hawks and Sparrows*. *Hawks* is a picaresque adventure, which Pasolini himself called an "ideo-comedy." In the film, a father and son walking along a road at the outskirts of Rome are joined by a talking crow who hails from the Land of Ideology, born of Father Doubt and Mother Consciousness. As they travel, the crow, like a leftist intellectual, continues to ask questions, make weighty pronouncements, and provide a running socio-political commentary. The men who are tired of the intrusive questions of the crow eventually decide to eat him. In the middle of this tragi-comic fable, there is some documentary footage of the 1964 funeral of Italian communist boss Palmiro Togliatti. An atheist Catholic and Marxist, Pasolini's own paradoxical relationship to religious institutions and the left intelligentsia is parodied through the figure of the crow. While there are no explicit references to the film in the Karagöz story, it is well known that Özdamar admired Pasolini's work; the narrator of *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* tells the reader that she runs into Pasolini in Cappadocia, Turkey during the shooting of his film *Medea*, and admits her excitement in encountering him (209). In addition to this brief reference to Pasolini in *The Bridge*, I also trace an analogy between *Hawks* and the Karagöz story in that in both works the animal figures become means for conveying social leftist commentary and they are physically punished for speaking the truth. Like the crow who gets eaten, the donkey too becomes unsavoury company and is beaten by the farmer toward the end of the story.

labor migration” (*Writing* 112), whose discursive weakness derives from the single-minded manner in which they approach the problem of migration.

Through the parodic laughter evoked by the socialist donkey, Özdamar manages to keep at a distance both a nationalist discourse and an uninformed scholarly position, which remains insufficient for articulating the changing categories (im)migrants occupy. This change is evident, however negatively, in the farmer’s shifting personality, whose moral values gradually decline up to the point when he trades his donkey for an Opel Record and experiences a split. His double/Reflection, whom he cannot recognize, symbolizes his youth, before he moved to Germany. Beaten and suffering from a heart-attack, the donkey leaves with the youth’s reflection abandoning the now wealthy farmer.

While Özdamar is very critical of capitalist dynamics, emerging from a deep social awareness, she breaks the solipsist circle of self-understanding both in Turkey and Germany, and searches for more interactive grounds. In response to much of the research on *Gastarbeiterliteratur* and *Ausländerliteratur*, which typically connote confinement between mutually exclusive home and foreign land, Özdamar draws on the history of Turkey and Germany within an interactive context, hence promoting a more accurate picture of the mutual responsibility shared by Germans and Turks alike. In this respect, she takes a position similar to Pamuk, who calls attention to the urgency of acknowledging the shared responsibility and the binding interactions between secular and religious groups in Turkey. Just as Pamuk uses double-edged characters that are in constant exile with respect to the ideological position they occupy, like Ka who is neither a supporter of the Army nor political Islam, Özdamar creates exilic subjectivities, similar to the narrator of “Mother Tongue” and the donkey, who constantly re-position themselves with respect to national myths through a double critical consciousness.

In order to find a means of articulating this double consciousness, Özdamar places emphasis on living speech. As Horrocks remarks in the “Commentary” to “Black Eye,” “by presenting concrete examples of experience in a working situation, she implies that only from such experiences can practical lessons be learned, not from... pious injunctions to love one another” (64). She avoids making idealist assertions, which may be limiting and fall short of giving expression to the social interactions that take place around us. Özdamar exhibits Turks and Germans in their everyday language, their vernacular, folk tales, and songs. Instead of drawing on nationalist, ethnic, and linguistic classifications, which tell us who belongs where, Özdamar critiques both cultures in relation to one another, not feeling the necessity to promote mutually exclusive models of identity that feed off the notion of “pure origins.”

To pursue this line of thinking, Özdamar juxtaposes the intellectual’s desire for theoretical reflection with the tragi-comic problems of the Turks trying to cross the border. In contradistinction with the self-spoken intellectual carefully gathering information, we encounter an illegal worker dressed as a soccer player who is striving to have a dialogue with the passport official. The phonetic misunderstandings give rise to witty word play, which echoes the misunderstandings and puns in the *Karagöz and Hacivat* shadow theatre.

“Your papers, please. Turkish?”

Soccer player: “Türküz.”

The passport official said: “Going into the Federal Republic, into the *Bundesrepublik*?”

Soccer player: “*Bunepislik*.”

“What is the purpose of your visit?” The soccer player said the name of a famous soccer club: “Futbol-futbol: *Fenerbahçe*.”

The passport official said: “A guest game?”

“Not guest, not work, *Fenerbahçe*.” (MT 85-6)

This dialogue illustrates the problems of language that occur at the literal and symbolic borders of Turkey and Germany. “Bunepislik” means “what dirt” in Turkish, and “Türküz” means “we are Turks”; and, “Fenerbahçe” is the name of a famous soccer team from Turkey. The Turkish

worker's self-assertion in the face of German domination, manifested through his persistence in responding to the German official's questions in broken German or Turkish opens up a socio-linguistic gap. Özdamar does not translate every Turkish expression inserted in the German text, invoking in the reader the same anxiety aroused in the German official. The result is a quasi-comical miscommunication between a Turkish worker in pretence and a German official who insists that the player must be a *guest*. If not a *guest* worker, he must at least be a *guest* game enthusiast.

Özdamar does not solely mirror the verbal tensions between Turks and Germans, but also the mis/communication among the Turks from different backgrounds. For example, a similar juxtaposition that we find between the Turkish worker and the German official can be observed between the donkey, who reflects on language and hospitality, and the Turkish worker he encounters in Germany.

“Do we have to admit that we understand immediately what we perceive through our eyes or ears? Even foreigners, whose language we haven't yet learned? Should we deny that we hear them when they are speaking in their language? Or should we say that we don't just hear them, but that we all understand what they are saying?...”

Then a *Gastarbeiter* came along wearing sun-glasses and he asked the donkey;

“Excellent Rabbi, Socrates.

You tell me: where is the whorehouse?” (MT 88-89)

The lack of communication between them creates a comical effect, but it also underlines the presence of a wide range of voices even when speaking of one “homogenous” community called the “Turks in Germany.” Just as we cannot classify Germans and Turks into rigid identitarian categories, we similarly cannot pretend there is a homogenous national community devoid of contradictions and frictions within the margins of the nation. Özdamar uses language as a theatrical space, where confrontation takes place, not only among different national communities, but also among Turks from different towns and with different dialects and concerns. As in the multicultural and multilingual Turkish shadow plays, where “Turkish Greeks, Turkish

Armenians, Turkish Jews, different Turks from different towns and classes and with different dialects... all misunderstood each other, but kept on talking and playing” (Özdamar, *The Bridge* 16). In Özdamar’s stories, the frictions are not to be seen in a negative light as they are symptomatic of the irreducible hybridity of the histories embodied in diverse languages.

It is very important to depict transnational actors in their own language in order to comprehend the confrontations that take place on the edge of their tongues. Confrontation helps break the rigidity of each others’ thinking through the narratives we construct and exchange. Even when it seems impossible to translate a culture, an idiom, a personal drama into the language of the “other,” we continue to try, acknowledging that the borders are there, but they are also flexible. To allow room for cross-contamination by crossing borders, and by recognizing the ruptures in continuity, is our seemingly contradictory responsibility, our double obligation.

The linguistic exchange Özdamar exemplifies opens a venue for an asymmetrical engagement with the diverging and converging communities within and across national boundaries. Pamuk shares a similar concern in *Snow* where he underlines the points of tension between secular and religious groups to call attention to the different forms of nationalisms and identitarianism. Özdamar makes a similar move, and questions the unified narratives of nationhood, but within a migratory context, giving voice to the underrepresented diasporic subjectivities. She uses language to record histories that recuperate losses incurred in migration and translation.

What Bakhtin writes of the novel is conceptually instructive in terms of Özdamar’s poetics. Bakhtin remarks that as opposed to the idealization of epic,

[c]haracteristic for the novel as a genre is not the image of a man in his own right, but a man who is precisely the *image of a language*.... If the subject making the novel specifically a novel is defined as a speaking person and his discourse, striving for social significance and a wider general application as one distinctive language in a heteroglot world—then the central problem for a stylistics of the novel may be formulated as the

problem of *artistically representing language, the problem of representing the image of a language.* (*Dialogic* 336)

In a similar vein, what Özdamar enacts is a “*play with the boundaries of speech types*” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 308). She does not offer analytical commentary of the language of the Turks at the border, or represent them in their silence. Özdamar inserts several speech types in her text, borrowed from the language of the immigrants in Germany, rather than writing a piece on them using proper German. Beyond a “unitary” or “correct” language (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 270), Özdamar’s narrative of the “border culture with its valorization of many languages, idioms, and sites of translation complements Bakhtinian notions of dialogism and heteroglossia” (Seyhan, *Writing* 116). The language of the work becomes “the system of its ‘languages’” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 262). She lays bare the stratification within the same national language as well as invents a language that mixes the folkloric strata of different languages to upset the conception of nation and narrative as unified. If language is one of the most important determinants shaping national consciousness, then Özdamar’s work complicates the text’s understanding of national identity by representing the border cultures in their translingual heteroglossia.

She invents a poetics whose dialogism and dynamism consist of the “distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different language and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 263). Discerning the problems enveloped both in the monologic historical accounts, which promote homogeneous national stereotypes by circumventing the strata within a language/culture, and neglecting the overlapping grounds on which different languages/nations interact, Özdamar re-imagines nationalisms at the point where they haunt us in the form of collective memory, and on the level of everyday policy-related issues. Emerging from the phenomenology of mobility, and oscillating between national frames

of reference and changing transnational geopolitics, Özdamar's language reveals the tensions that arise through the transforming and interlocking patterns of community in a multicultural Europe.

In 1992, Özdamar was asked to write an article on the relationship of Germans and non-Germans living in the Federal Republic for *Die Zeit*. In her article titled "Black Eye and his Donkey," she surprises her readers by giving an account of what happened when she directed the theatre version of "Karagöz in Almania" rather than making broad statements about the relationship between the two nations, or the prevailing hostilities. In what appears to be a mixture of story-telling and dramatic enactment, she offers the following examples:

At the start of rehearsals an almost sacred atmosphere reigned on stage. What we are doing is something special! For the first time, a play about Turks. Hushed voices—loving glances. Slow movements. The animals too, were friends with one another... It lasted for a week... A short while after the actors got cross with one another, the animals started in their turn... The Turkish star wanted to show the German star, who was acting the part of the Turk, how to play a guest-worker. The German said to him: "You caraway-chewing Turk, learn to speak English properly before you try to teach me anything..." One day an actress who was playing a Turkish woman appeared at rehearsals wearing a headscarf. I asked her why. A German actor had told her that she ought to thus demonstrate her commitment to being Turkish. ("Black Eye" 59-61)

Similar to the Turkish guest worker whose letter inspired her to write "Karagöz in Almania," Özdamar does not respond to the question of the foreigner by speaking of Germans in a negative light, or reducing the Turks into silent subjects. In fact, "compounded by a further refusal to consider the issue, as invited, in the clear-cut terms of relations between Germans on the one side and non-Germans on the other," (Horrocks, "Commentary" 64) she depicts the backstage, where Turks and Germans simulate one another through dramatic enactment and role-playing, e.g. a German woman acting out a Turkish guest worker. On the one hand, we testify to the continuing tensions among these actors on the set. On the other, they keep on interacting, and despite their arguments, as Özdamar writes at the end of her account, even six years after the performance, they continue to "pursue one another like lovers" ("Black Eye" 63). The tensions, as Horrocks

observes, “are shown to have little to do with the ethnic or cultural prejudices that surface when they are verbalised” (“Black Eye” 66). In any case, although Özdamar does not comment on any of these exchanges, she tells the anecdote in such a style that, as readers, we are shown the absurdity and the irrationality of the prejudices of the actors rehearsing. “Nowhere is this more apparent than in the farcical anecdote about the donkey where, in a *reduction ad absurdum* reminiscent of the burlesque humour of her own play *Karagöz*, national characteristics are even attributed to the animal... (‘A Turkish donkey would never do anything like that’)” (Horrocks, “Commentary” 67).

The initial peaceful co-existence of many nationalities with “hushed voices and loving glances” during the preparation of “a play about Turks,” and the idea that even the animals were at peace with each other, has a “biblical allusion” as Horrocks explains: it “suggests that such harmonious co-existence is the stuff of other-worldly idealism, at best a utopian dream,” (“Commentary” 65) and verbal exchanges can be “regarded as a healthy way of working off tensions” (“Commentary” 66). What Özdamar wants to demonstrate through this account about the rehearsal is that whether or not the people of different nationalities are prejudiced or “tolerant” toward the culture of the other, they sustain an ongoing interaction, in contrast to the repressive hushed voices and polite silences that make confrontation impossible. The engagement of various voices keeps repressive xenophobic ghettoization and violence at bay. Even when there are frictions and a regression to crude stereotypes, there is a continuing verbal interaction, which retains a space of relation and provides the opportunity for genuine encounters with their potential for dismantling the national stereotypes. Thus, in Özdamar’s stories, the verbal frictions are not to be seen in a purely negative light.

Özdamar’s satirical take concerning the Turkish-German experience suggests a certain obstacle to the idea of hospitality linked with ethics. When talking about life in Germany, she

notes how the media have created an image of Germany as a nation where “the SS is on the march again... they have fostered an atmosphere in which any German, on seeing a foreigner, feels obliged to make a special effort to demonstrate that he or she is *not* xenophobic” (“Black Eye” 52). Özdamar speaks sarcastically about the “hushed voices” in the rehearsal, because, between racial violence and moral dogmatism, which pressures Germans to act a certain way, she underlines the different forms of interaction that bring Turks and Germans together.

The kind of hospitality we trace in her textual labor is more in line with Derrida’s “original concept of hospitality, of the duty (*devoir*) of hospitality, and of the right (*droit*) to hospitality” (*Cosmopolitanism* 5). Hospitality is not simply a code of behaviour we adopt to treat one another with tolerance. Rather it is the recognition that by virtue of opening up a door for the other to be included in our home, we are simultaneously preparing the grounds for exclusion by erecting walls around the space we call home. Hence, as Derrida notes in *Monolingualism*, the root of the term hospitality, *hospes*, is one word at the end of a semantic chain that ties the notion of hospitality with that concept of hostility (*hostis, hospes, despotes*) (14).

Despite all the tensions or contradictions which distinguish it, and despite all the perversions that can befall it, one cannot speak of cultivating an ethic of hospitality. Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one’s home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality...* But for this very reason, and because being at home with oneself (*l’être-soi chez soi–l’ipséité même* –the other within oneself) supposes a reception or inclusion of the other which one seeks to appropriate, control, and master according to different modalities of violence, there is a history of hospitality, an always possible perversion of *the* law of hospitality (which can appear unconditional), and of the laws which come to limit and condition it in its inscription as a law. (*Cosmopolitanism* 16-7)

Seen from this perspective, hospitality encloses both positive and negative tendencies, entangled as they are in one another. Özdamar brings out both these tendencies in the context of Turkish

migration to Germany. My emphasis on the double critical consciousness throughout this chapter can be seen in relation to the dual move Özdamar makes in her stories.

She is at once inviting the reader to see what is at stake in the experience of border-crossing: estrangement toward the new culture, alienation from one's mother tongue and culture, endless problems at the borders, death, poverty, separation from one's beloved, and so on. Yet, Özdamar also takes every occasion to remind us that the same hardship gives rise, simultaneously, to a genuinely enriching experience. That is why she remarks in an interview that one needs to leave her/his native country, "indeed to betray it, and then you [can] be in two places simultaneously" (Horrocks, "Living" 53). Being at home in this state of exile develops the ability to think and live by perceiving the network of filiations among different cultures. Özdamar destabilizes the rigid borders between Turkey and Germany, East and West, to attest to the fact that transnational subjectivities both "represent a conscious effort to transmit a linguistic and cultural heritage [of the homeland] that is articulated through acts of personal and collective memory" (Seyhan, *Writing* 12) and have "the historic opportunity to create tolerance for plurality in host countries" (*Writing* 11). Their position must be understood in relation to this double responsibility.

Additionally, Özdamar demonstrates, both on a literal and an allegorical level, that crossing borders does not have so much to do with two dichotomous and exclusive worlds in need of bridging. The literal journeys between East and West Germany, and the allegorical journeys between Republican and pre-Republican Turkey, manifest both the continuities and the ruptures between these interwoven pairs that are not precisely divisible. When portraying the encounters between East and West, and what each of these names represent (Capitalism/Communism, secularism/Islamic tradition etc.), Özdamar pays attention to the intersections rather than promoting two incommensurable paradigms. For example, although

there are differences, historical and political, between what East and West represent to Özdamar's characters, when the narrator from "Mother Tongue" crosses from East to West Berlin, she finds that: "When I was in the West, I looked at the ground and said, 'Oh, it rained here too'" (MT 21). "This unexpected sameness within difference underlines the complexity of the East-West divide in Özdamar's writing" (Haines and Littler 136). But it also reminds the reader of the unexpected similarities that we come across in the assumed West and East within Turkey in *Snow*. An example would be Kadife's surprise when she finds—upon leaving her life as a model in Istanbul and moving to Kars where she veils—that both in the more Westernized city of Istanbul, and in the anti-Western circle of Blue in Kars, there are equally dominating patriarchal power struggles.

In both *Snow* and *Mother Tongue*, the unexpected discovery of similarity in difference between the indivisible pairs, East/West, center/periphery, challenge the bridge metaphor that confides in two incommensurable worlds. Pamuk and Özdamar contemplate on the enmeshed legacies and multi-referential frames of reference that mobilize the firm boundaries between East/West, Turkey/Europe, endowing the reader with an analytical alternative to the logic of hierarchical opposites. The transnational actors in *Mother Tongue* reconfigure the imagined peripheries among the linguistic and cultural legacies of the nations they variously inhabit, and create a sensitized understanding of resemblance in difference, thus inviting future formulations of the increasingly multicultural social interactions.

4 THE DOUBLE BIND IN MONOLINGUALISM OF THE OTHER

4.1 Introduction: A French-Algerian Autobiography

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I offered a close reading of two literary works by a Turkish and a Turkish-German writer with the hope of illuminating the East-West entanglement both within Turkey and between Turkey and Western Europe. My goal in moving from a national to a transnational context in the second chapter was to multiply the references through which to explore this entanglement in diverse geopolitical contexts. Both in terms of form and content, Pamuk and Özdamar share similar concerns, as they relentlessly call into question the boundaries between different genres as well as between different national communities and political groups.

My goal in the third chapter is to expand the geographical breadth of the project further, by calling into play the French-Algerian writer-philosopher Jacques Derrida's testimonial-theoretical work *Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin* (1996). My purpose in choosing Derrida to bring into a comparison with Pamuk and Özdamar is twofold. First, on a cultural-historical level, Derrida's background and his simultaneous engagement with the French and North African cultures place him in an important position for the debates concerning the relationship between center and margin, Europe and its peripheries. Whereas in Pamuk's and Özdamar's texts the East-West question becomes a thread that runs through the borders within a divided Turkey, and between Turkey and Germany, in *Monolingualism*, the East-West division is grafted on a North-South (higher up/lower down) division that runs through the borders within Algeria (e.g., Algiers/Oran), and between Algeria and France. In each case, the hierarchical divisions reflect a concern with the center-margin problem that takes on different forms.

Like Özdamar, who employs a critical double stance in re-visiting her enduring personal, cultural and political connections to Turkey and Germany, Derrida offers a double critique of

both French-European hegemony and anti-Westernist Algerian nationalism growing in response to it. This double critical approach allows him to cast a skeptical eye on the myths of origin circulating both in Algeria and France. Rather than promoting Algeria as an Eastern culture, which needs to recover its non-Western roots prior to French colonialization, he places emphasis on the points of intersection and tension between the legacies of the two cultures. In this respect, his concern with re-evaluating Algerian national identity, before and after colonization, invites intriguing comparisons with Pamuk's account of Turkey's quasi-self-colonial relationship to Europe.

Second, on a formal level, Derrida develops an understanding of autobiography that helps us think about the process of identification, and the relation between the self and other, in an alternative light. Like Pamuk and Özdamar, he writes in a mixed genre, akin to Menippean satire. *Monolingualism* consists of a phony dialogue in a quasi-theatrical setting, poetic articulations, and philosophical discussions of language and exile. In its various generic combinations, the text is profoundly autobiographical from the beginning to the end. Derrida's exploration of the different issues is coupled with a consideration of his connection to the French language as well as to French and Algerian cultures. It is on this autobiographical thread woven into the texture of *Monolingualism* that this chapter proposes to concentrate. My goal in these introductory pages is to elaborate on the meaning of the autobiographical thread we come across in Derrida's work to develop an understanding of its relevance in the re-configuration of the entangled communities he brings into discussion in *Monolingualism*.

In the Epilogue to *Monolingualism*, Derrida defines his engagement with this text in terms of what makes the engagement problematic:

What I am sketching here is, above all, not the beginning of some autobiographical or anamnestic outline, nor even a timid essay toward an intellectual bildungsroman. Rather than an exposition of myself, it is an account of what will have placed an obstacle in the

way of this auto-exposition for me. An account, therefore, of what will have exposed me to that obstacle and thrown me against it. (*MO* 70)

By referring to his writing as an exposition of the *obstacle* to auto-exposition, Derrida sets the tone for the entire text. My goal is in part to explore the meaning and the condition of this obstacle. How does this obstacle arise? What are its repercussions?

In *Monolingualism*, Derrida mimics the autobiographical genre, while critiquing its self-centered structure. He proposes a malleable concept of the self, where the “I” recollects itself always in reference to an elsewhere, which interrupts the self-enfolding circular movement. He conveys a confessional tone, but avoids delving into personal memoirs for “anamnesis would be risky... I’d like to escape my own stereotypes” (“Strange” 34). Derrida’s attempt to escape his own stereotypes stands in stark contrast to the desire of traditional autobiography to attain an identity model of eternal and stable character. Thus, it may be useful here to take a brief excursion to lay out some of the differences between traditional autobiography and Derrida’s conception of the autobiographical desire, which unsettles the conventional definitions.

Typically understood, autobiography defines the genre, where, in line with the Christian confessional tradition, the “I” assumes self-unification and returns to a fully fledged self following a series of truthful confessions. The autobiographical inscription presumes a transparent self *par excellence*, which exists in its pure singularity prior to the produced text. The *autos* is granted to the writer who reproduces private memories, and testifies to an interiority that grants her/him the right to affirm a unique identity as its rightful property. As Szabados remarks, by offering examples from Augustine’s and Rousseau’s *Confessions*,

traditional autobiography can be seen as depending on a certain picture of self-knowledge, on a certain picture of mind whose dimensions have been elaborated by Descartes and scores of philosophers of mind. This picture has as its features ‘privileged access’ to the contents of our minds, epistemological solitude and final, incorrigible authority over first-person psychological utterances. (2)

Constituting a restrictive relationship between *autos* (self), *bios* (life), and *graphe* (writing), traditional autobiography assumes above all that the self possesses a self-referential and immutable identity model, which can be recuperated through an exile ending with the return to one's origins.

Derrida reveals the many fissures created in such conventional understandings of autobiography as a genre, and disturbs the fantasy of the proper in self-relation. Calling into question "the primitive passion for property," (*Aporias* 3) he places critical attention on the structural alterity that is constitutive of the desire to "pure auto-affection" (*Archive* 97-8). According to Derrida, autobiography appeals to the desire to "gather together even that which disseminates and, by its very essence, defies all gathering" (*Taste* 41). In this respect, it conveys more than a sense of autonomy and closed subjectivity. Autobiography underlines the dynamic relation between self and other in what appears to be a self-closed writing practice, thus inviting an understanding of hospitality in the personal matters that are otherwise distinctly separated from public matters.

Derrida's entire *oeuvre* is both autobiographical, and works against the possibility of autobiography. In other words, what he performs under the domain of autobiography is not an accumulation of personal anecdotes concerning his French-Algerian-Jewish past. What interests him is not the "'autobiographical genre', but rather the autobiographicity that greatly overflows the 'genre' of autobiography" (*Taste* 41). In fact, Derrida deliberately avoids delving into personal details and memoirs. Seen from this perspective, Derrida never wrote an autobiography, but he always responded to the "autobiographical design of memory" (*Taste* 41). In Bennington's words, "all of J.D.'s texts are in some way autobiographical," ("Derridabase" 321) but not about the "presumptuous" (*Taste* 64) private anecdotes gathering together an "I" that exists prior to the

writing. An autobiographical sketch, in Derrida's view, is at best a writing practice, a playful exercise on behalf of the writing self who affirms the coming of the other.

The autobiographical no longer stands for the purely idiomatic writing of the self in the absence of alterity, but it signals a writing "practice that ... embraces the ethical imperative of the promise or pledge that precedes the self" (Kronick 999). As Derrida notes, his is not simply "a concern with responsibility in the noble ethico-metaphysical or ethico-juridical sense, it is also a concern about testimony, about testament" (*Taste* 79). What is at stake, as Dooley and Kavanagh argue in *The Philosophy of Derrida*, is "always an ethics and a politics of memory... [and] essentially the desire to do justice to the *other*" (107):

The question of memory is also a question of responsibility. How we think about identity and the past determines how we think about justice and the future... The work of mourning is essentially the desire to do justice to the *other*. All of Derrida's work can be read and understood in the context of this desire. (Dooley 107)

Writing against the monopoly of official historical records, Derrida holds on to the "internal polylogue... [which implies] not giving up the 'culture' which carries these voices. At which point the encyclopedic temptation becomes inseparable from the autobiographical. And philosophical discourse is often only an economic or strategic formalization of this avidity" ("Strange" 36). Between an uncritical acceptance of history and the risk of being drawn into nostalgia, he challenges the solipsist formation of collective identity in the tradition of official history. Similar to Özdamar's embodiment of the simultaneous memories of her grandfather's culture, of the distant Turkish culture left behind, and of her immediate environment in Germany, Derrida emphasizes the importance of mourning the voices that are lost, repressed, or forgotten with the passing of time.

For Derrida, "history is not a privileged authority but part of... '*le texte général*'—the general text, which has no boundaries" (Culler 130). Therefore, the responsibility of re-visiting

the past urges Derrida, like Pamuk and Özdamar, to testify to fragmented representations of cultural memory. All three writers acknowledge, to borrow Derrida's words, that "inheritance is never a *given*, it is always a task" (*Specters* 54). Instead of subordinating themselves to the narratives of the past, they re-configure the past in the light of the changing narratives of the present and the future. Autobiographical memory resists the totalising force of reason, which marginalizes the "other," and treats difference as an erroneous contingency that must be overcome in time. Instead it sheds light on the important role played by mourning, which serves as "a focal point for conceptual and theoretical activity" (Dooley 16). By virtue of its resistance against totality, the act of mourning surprises the historical; it enables us to construct future narratives of personal as well as national identity in the light of the entanglements of past, present, and future.

Moreover, Derrida's consistent engagement with the obstacle to auto-exposition brings to surface the complex network of relations between history, memory, and identity. By calling attention to this obstacle, Derrida underlines the "space of relation" (*MO* 19) opened between self and other in autobiography. We can envision this space of relation as a conceptual tool that throws light on the entanglement of not only self and other, but also other seemingly oppositional dichotomies and conflicting premises such as center/margin. Thinking of this interactive space of relation, which challenges the notion of mutually exclusive binaries, can have important repercussions for re-configuring the tensions pertaining to French-Algerian relations and Turkey's relation to Europe. In my discussion of *Snow*, as I examined the dialogic encounters between different political groups in Turkey, I underlined the entanglement of Sunay and Blue, by exposing their double-edged personalities and the inconsistencies in their seemingly intact discourses. In my reading of Derrida's *Monolingualism*, I make a similar move, and explore the fissures of rigid identity models as I look at how Derrida uses himself as an example while also

questioning the exigent aspects of the logic of exemplarity. Whereas, for example, Pamuk shows the Janus-faced personality of Ka, by inserting the snow scheme to lay out the conflicting positions Ka simultaneously occupies, Derrida brings into play the notions of “double interdiction” or the “double law” (*MO* 8), which make it impossible for him to adopt a monological position.

Because the double interdiction challenges all unified narratives, Derrida uses this concept in critiquing the points of tension and contradiction in the rigid boundaries erected between national identities (French vs. Algerian) as well as between different genres (philosophy vs. literature). The notion of double interdiction complicates Derrida’s position on two levels, first as a French-Algerian, and second as a writer-philosopher. The hyphens between the adjectives used in describing Derrida suggest the constant border-crossing we encounter in his writings. In this respect, Derrida differs from both Western philosophers and French-Algerian writers who are concerned with similar issues, but do not question the premises of the institution from which they speak.

Derrida creates playful texts, which “keep the memory of literature and philosophy,” (“Strange” 73) while betraying the boundaries of these institutions. The reader will recall Özdamar’s remark that only through the betrayal of her/his native country can one be in two places at once. On a similar note, Derrida betrays both literary and philosophical institutions to create a hybrid genre, which makes use of various genres without belonging to anyone. He approaches both genres/institutions in relation to one another. Derrida is at once intrigued by “the institution [of literature] which allows one to *say everything, in every way*” (“Strange” 36) and the institution of philosophy “more capable of posing politically the question of literature” (“Strange” 39) where literature appears “impotent” (“Strange” 39) in questioning its own premises. His work can thus neither be reduced to literature nor to philosophy. It is a combination

of the two, and functions as “a place from which the history of this frontier [between literature and philosophy] could be thought or even displaced—in writing itself and not only by historical or theoretical reflection” (“Strange” 34). Derrida’s work, in this respect, attests to generic entanglements.

He arrives at philosophy from a literary and historicist perspective, and at literature with a philosophical awareness, as if each carefully crafted genre could only be identified through its relation to another. For example, when he writes on philosophy or responds to previous thinkers, he reflects a deep concern with the “historicity” and “historical responsibility” (“Strange” 55) of philosophy. As Young observes,

[w]hereas other philosophers would write of “philosophy,” for you it was always “western philosophy.” Whiteness, otherness, margins, decentring: it was obvious to me what you were up to, what possibilities you were striving towards, what presuppositions you were seeking to dislodge. (412)

Immutable and untimely identity models do not find a safe place in Derrida’s philosophical work. As he writes in “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” “all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—*eidos*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia*, (essence, existence, substance, subject) *alethēia*, transcendendality, consciousness, God, man and so forth” (279-80). Derrida reveals the fissures of these stable centers, by not taking for granted the metaphysical and the essentialist prerogatives of the institution of philosophy. He traces the element of contingency, “insisting on splits, fissures, discontinuities in the corpus” (Young 411) gathered under the name of the “West” and “Western philosophy.”

As Young further observes, even long before Derrida revealed any personal memories that could possibly allow one to locate where this philosopher could be coming from, his approach to Western philosophy made one realize that he was no “français de souche”:

You had once guardedly spoken of your childhood memories, your “nostalgia,” far more briefly though than H  l  ne Cixous had recalled her “Algeriance...” That was, however, my only clue, apart from when I had first seen you in 1979 and understood immediately that you were no “fran  ais de souche.” What a relief... All the same, even before that moment I already knew that something serious was going on. It was as plain as punch even if I found it impossible then to identify where it was coming from. What was certain was that it was *somewhere else*, and that it was producing a strong effect of disorientation (or rather, disoccidentation). (my emphasis, 411)

Derrida does not only arrive at the logocentrism of Western philosophy from an *elsewhere*, as suggested by Young, but his engagement with any given genre, culture, and language is determined by the traces of an *elsewhere*, which marks a division, an opening toward the other.

What interests Derrida is not to seek an absolute truth through Western philosophy, but to examine the autobiography of philosophy. He uses “history against philosophy: when confronted with essentialist, idealizing theories and claims to ahistorical or transhistorical understanding, he asserts the historicity of these discourses and theoretical assumptions” (Culler 129). At the same time, Derrida rejects an uncritical examination of history, and uses philosophy against history. “Deconstruction couples a philosophical critique of history and historical understanding with the specification that discourse is historical and meaning historically determined” (Culler 129). In other words, he shows that what we call truth is a historically determined discourse, but that we continue to *make truth* nevertheless. By replacing *truth*, as an end in itself, with the process of *truth-making* (MO 60), as a means, Derrida unsettles the hierarchy between essence and supplement, fact and fiction. The consequence of this way of thinking is to take into equal consideration the different discourses that are produced under diverse circumstances and cultures without imposing a hierarchical classification on them. Derrida does not aim to reverse the hierarchical formulas by, for example, subordinating centers to peripheries, East to West, Algerian to French culture; he wants to do away with the formula altogether.

At the heart of Derrida's double engagement with literature and philosophy lies his desire to call into question the points of tension within the intact discourses pertaining to generic/national/linguistic identity. While he dismantles these discourses, however, he does not propose to do away with them completely. In fact, for Derrida, the boundaries between genres, nations, and languages cannot be taken down, but they can be overturned and teased to shed light on the cross-contamination. Seen from this perspective, Derrida re-writes history while recognizing that the very model of history is a product of the history that he wants to re-write (Young 412). The double interdiction, called into play through the simultaneous "resistance of existence to the... system" (*Taste* 40) and the impossibility of stepping outside the system, is the focal point of all writing activities for Derrida.

Beyond the generic boundaries drawn between literature and philosophy, Derrida underlines the autobiographical desire, which informs every act of writing. What concerns him is not autobiography as a genre, but the autobiographical thread that trespasses the different forms of writing and archive.

... [W]hat interests me today is not strictly called either literature or philosophy, I'm amused by the idea that my adolescent desire—let's call it that—should have directed me toward something in writing which was neither the one nor the other. What was it? "Autobiography" is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today. At this moment, here, I'm trying, in a way that would commonly be called "autobiographical," to remember what happened when the desire to write came to me, in a way that was as obscure as it was compulsive, both powerless and authoritarian. Well, what happened then was just like an autobiographical desire. At the "narcissistic" moment of "adolescent" identification, this was above all the desire to inscribe a memory or two. Deep down, there was something like a lyrical movement toward confidences and confessions. Still today there remains in me an obsessive desire to save in uninterrupted inscription, in the form of a memory, what happens—or *fails to happen*. ("Strange" 34-5)

Derrida's interest lies in the autobiographical desire, which "crosses within itself the archive of the 'real' and the archive of 'fiction'. Already we'd have trouble not spotting but separating out historical narrative, literary fiction, and philosophical reflexion" ("Strange" 35). Although his

writing retains the memory of all these genres, it blurs the boundaries in between and places emphasis on the desire that propels the act of writing.

When Derrida underlines the obsessive desire to capture everything in writing, he does not imply that this desire can be fulfilled or turned into a project that can be realized. The desire is compulsive, for “before any other memory, writing destines itself, as if acting on its own, to anamnesia,” (*MO* 8) but it also enfolds its own failure. In other words, a method becomes available to autobiography “on the condition of a degree of failure on the method’s part” (Smith 14). It is the simultaneous desire and failure to archive everything that gives rise to “the feeling of existence as excess, ‘being superfluous,’ the very beyond of meaning giving rise to writing” (“Strange” 36). The excess makes us aware of the fact that history is an archive made available to us through incomplete, semi-fictional representations; thus, it enables us to resist the monologic accounts of official history by placing critical attention on multiple testimonies, some of which go unnoticed or underrepresented.

Final meaning always already escapes us as the interpretive system remains open. Derrida loosens up “the determinacy of a particular text by attuning our reading to the points of undecidability, which resist the attempts of any determinate author or reader to decide its meaning once and for all” (Dooley 54). Yet, despite the contingency, there are moments of decision. What we face is not a passive interdiction, but a double responsibility. We are responsible for both being open to the other testimonies, and affirming our own position in response to them. The consequences of the inherent contingency of meaning are not relativism or nihilism. Dooley and Kavanagh articulate the difference between Derrida’s position and relativism quite explicitly in the following statement:

It is not uncommon in these [postmodernist] circles to hear people deny the existence of “truth,” “reason” or “identity,” and to privilege instead “difference,” “multiplicity,” “indeterminacy” and so on. But according to Derrida this is just to reverse the “all or

nothing,” privileging the latter over the former... That is why relativism, for example, is a contradictory position. Relativism denies the existence of absolutes, claiming that meaning is relative to different languages and cultures... But in order to have any conceptual coherence, relativism has to presuppose precisely the “all” that it claims to oppose... We could not even conceive of concepts such as “difference” and “multiplicity” without *some* conception of identity and truth. (52-3)

In other words, the discovery that there is no single ideal way of thinking and living “must not lead to a kind of neutralization of difference” (*MO* 63). Rather it assigns us the task of examining the existing communities in the light of the different ways in which they relate to one another. Instead of relying on narratives that produce rigid dichotomies and counteractive dynamics, the failure in autobiography sheds light on the intersubjective aspect of social and cultural interactions; it encourages us to seek productive narratives, with their potential for revealing the plurality of historical, linguistic, and cultural references that constitute each one of us.

The failure of the autobiographical desire disturbs the purisms we encounter in different national, ethnic, and political groups that use East and West as polar opposites to promote self-valorizing hierarchies. In *Monolingualism*, Derrida uses the autobiographical form to propose a “strategic alternative to the passivity of dependency theory or the fundamentalist nationalism of the return-to-the-authentic-tradition-untrammelled-by-the-west variety that responds to the present by seeking to deny the past while itself invoking the European Romantic trope of a return to a true, authentic, indigenous culture” (Young 41). While criticizing the long years of oppression that the natives of Algeria suffered under a European power, Derrida also underlines the error in taking a purist nationalist approach in Algeria, where several cultures, religions and languages have shaped the region over many centuries. Derrida’s double critique¹⁶ allows him to

¹⁶ Derrida’s critical engagement with both Algerian and French cultures is not only visible in his writings, but also in his political activism in Algeria and France. In 1994, when the International Committee in Support of Algerian Intellectuals and the League of Human Rights together issued an appeal for peace in Algeria, Derrida read his text titled “Taking a Stand for Algeria,” in which he expounded four basic principles: a new international solidarity that would not detract from Algeria’s autonomy; an electoral agreement; the effective disassociation of the political and the theological; and a new Third Estate in Algeria, meaning all Algerian citizens who feel represented neither by the

take a stance whereby he condemns “(at least since 1947)... the colonial policy of France in Algeria but hoped, until the last moment, in 1962, that a form of independence would be invented that would make cohabitation possible with the French Algerians” (*Jacques* 330). When Derrida suggests that the autobiographical has less to do with a self-reflexive subject than with the space of relation between self and other created through a structural opening, he writes with the hope of accommodating such co-habitation. This opening equals the ethical imperative of responding to the other’s demand for a countersignature, a hospitable and unconditional “yes” even when communication is restricted. Even when there is a long colonial history to come to terms with, as it is in between France and Algeria, re-visiting the conflicts of the past (and the Westernist/anti-Westernist dichotomy) in the light of this structural opening would be a positive step toward change.

As Samir Amin reminds us in *The Maghreb in the Modern World*, “Maghreb, in Arabic, signifies the ‘West’, indicating that this region occupies an ambiguous geopolitical position that is at once ‘Western’, from the standpoint of Arabs in Mashreq (the Middle East), and ‘oriental’ from the standpoint of Europe” (Woodhull, *Transfigurations* x). In this respect, as part of an ambiguous Maghreb, Algeria, much like Turkey, has a great potential for dismantling the East-West opposition. Derrida’s dismantling of oppositional conceptualization suspends the boundaries between East and West, and we must keep in mind that “*suspended* means *suspense*, but also *dependence*, condition, conditionality” (“Strange” 48). The implication of the

state nor by the organizations struggling against it by means of killing or threats of violence. (Woodhull, “Postcolonial” 214) This appeal was followed by a peace initiative in 1997 published in the journal *Esprit* in July, which criticized both the restrictive visa policy of France and the political and civil deterioration in Algeria (Woodhull, “Postcolonial” 214). Derrida was also actively involved in political matters concerning other nations. In 1981, he founded the Jan Huss Association with Jean-Pierre Vernant, of which he later became the vice-president, to help dissident or persecuted Czech intellectuals. In 1983, he participated in the “organization of the exhibition ‘Art against Apartheid’, and in the initiatives to create the ‘Cultural Foundation against Apartheid’” (*Jacques* 335), as well as the campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela. During the 1990s he was very particularly vocal about issues of immigration and undocumented immigrants [les *sans-papiers*] (Lorenzo Fabbri, *Late Derrida* 215).

simultaneous suspense and dependency between binaries such as East and West is to see them in their entanglement. The space of relation between self and other, West and its peripheries, France and Algeria is characterized by various tensions. An acknowledgement of these tensions would help us understand their autobiographies in terms of their mutual engagement. As Derrida puts it, “in a minimal autobiographical trait can be gathered the greatest potentiality of historical, theoretical, linguistic, philosophical culture,” (“Strange” 43) and it is this culture that is recollected, de-structured, and reconstructed through the narratives we construct for ourselves in connection with the culture of the “other.”

My purpose in the following two sections on *Monolingualism* is to study the text’s re-configuration of the entangled relationship between self and other, center and margin, colonizer and colonized, by first focusing on its formal and generic concerns. I will subsequently move to a discussion of the role of language in defining and re-inventing this relationship.

4.2 The Law of Genre: Aporias

4.2.1 Dialogic Testimonies

Monolingualism of the Other; or, the Prosthesis of Origin was initially conceived of as a conference paper. As the reader will find inside the cover page, “an oral version of this text, shorter and often different in form, was presented at a colloquium organized by Patrick Mensah and David Wills, hosted by Edouard Glissant, and held on April 23-25, 1992, at the Louisiana State University.” The conference titled “Echoes from Elsewhere” / “*Renvois d’ailleurs*” was both bilingual and international, and it aimed to address *francophonie* outside France, within the comparative framework of literature, language, politics, and culture.

Monolingualism performs on two levels: theoretical and testimonial. On one level, Derrida examines the structural limits of our ownership of language, and the possibilities opened by these limitations. On another level, he offers a historical context to his theoretical reflections

by including personal anecdotes from his childhood, growing up as a Jewish boy in Algeria at the time when it was a colony of France. *Monolingualism* is both a philosophical treatise on language and identity, and a semi-autobiographical excursion.

Derrida often produced work in response and as countersignatures to colleagues' inquiries, dedications to dead friends, and participations to invited roundtable discussions. His writing is "a sort of animal moment [which] seeks to appropriate what always comes, always, from an *external* provocation" (*Points* 352). It is of small wonder then that one of his most explicitly autobiographical texts was produced as part of this conference, which raises the question of belonging in relation to language and culture. The starting point of the conference was a dialogue initiated between Derrida and his colleagues and friends such as Abdelkebir Khatibi, the Moroccan writer and literary critic. This dialogue is transferred into the text of *Monolingualism* on a different level. What we encounter in this work is not an autobiographer who tells the story of his life to himself and by himself. In question is a dialogic autobiography, where the author begins and ends the *récit* in a colloquial mode.

Monolingualism is divided into paragraphs marked by lines of dialogue. The dialogue takes place between Derrida's two interlocutors, who testify to the division of the same. This quasi-dramatic enactment of the phony dialogue between Derrida's interlocutors brings together two conflicting voices. The contradictions between the statements that both voices make give rise to the necessity to continue the dialogue, provoking each side to build their arguments in relation to one another. The dialogic space opened up by the evocative tone is related to the obstacle of auto-exposition that Derrida mentions in the Epilogue. The other conflicting voice within him keeps Derrida from engaging in a monologic narrative, by reminding him of the necessity to take into consideration the response of the other.

The dialogue in *Monolingualism* resembles, in part, the Socratic dialogue. In *Problems in Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin writes that in the Socratic dialogue, “the dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to official monologism” (110).¹⁷ The two basic devices used in the Socratic dialogue are “synchrisis,” or the “juxtaposition of various views,” and “anacrisis,” the “means for eliciting and provoking the words of one’s interlocutor, forcing him to express his opinion and express it thoroughly” (110). The reader can trace something akin to these two devices in the way Derrida sets up the dialogue between the interlocutors. It is through the dialogic encounter between the two voices that Derrida underlines the oscillation between self and other, who must affirm the alterity of one another through a re-positioning of the self within this space of relation. The voices contest and second-guess each others’ statements, interrupting the moment of self-closure. As one interlocutor accuses the other for committing a logical contradiction, the other interlocutor (echoing Derrida) carefully develops his answer, by calling on the fissures of metaphysical argumentation and dwelling in the experience of the undecidable:

- “Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine.”
- You speak the impossible. Your speech does not hold water. It will always remain incoherent... because its rhetoric does the impossible with meaning... You are putting forward a sort of solemn attestation that stupidly drags itself by the heels into logical contradiction...
- Is that so? But then why would they not stop?... Even you cannot seem to manage to convince yourself, and you multiply your objection... (*MO* 2-4)

As Derrida speaks, the internal voice accuses him of committing “performative contradiction,” “logical absurdity,” “the lie” (*MO* 3), but he carefully finds a space “between affirmation and position,” (*Negotiations* 26) yielding neither to “purely ethical behaviour (total openness to the other) [or] a complete violent exclusion of the other (total appropriation of alterity)” (Roffe 42).

¹⁷ Bakhtin refers strictly to the early examples when Socrates had not yet turned into a teacher and the seeming dialogue had not yet “degenerated completely into a question-and-answer form for training neophytes (catechism)” (110).

In this respect, the dialogue can be understood as an enactment of aporetic doubling, whereby a reconciliation of difference is constantly deferred.

The oscillation between two inconsistent premises, or between evidences for and against, raises the question of testimony as it casts doubt on truth value. When reading this “double-tongued text,” (Bennington, “Double”) the reader can almost imagine Derrida standing in a courtroom. Here we encounter the theatrical aspect of the framework of the text. Derrida gives a performance where the only evidence of the credibility of his propositions is his testimony. Derrida’s interlocutor refers to his statement as a solemn attestation, and casts doubt on the truthfulness of his testimony. Derrida responds to this observation by repeating over and again that the boundary between factual/logical and fictional/believable is precisely the point at which a kind of ambiguity arises. “Alone in a genre which becomes in turn a universal example, thus interbreeding and accumulating the two logics, that of exemplarity and that of the host as hostage,” Derrida testifies “to the unbelievable. To what can, at any rate, only be believed... beyond the limits of proof, indication, certified acknowledgement [*le constat*], and knowledge” (*MO* 20). At once the host and the hostage, he addresses a plea to the reader “for faith or confidence, beg to be believed at my word, there where equivocation is ineffaceable and perjury always possible, precisely unverifiable” (“Typewriter” 111). He confesses that his word is unverifiable, because the boundary between truth and fiction is undecideable, and that to believe in his word would be an act of faith.

So Derrida calls out to the reader by reminding him/her of the risk of perjury. “I therefore venture to present myself to you here, *ecce homo*, in parody, as the exemplary Franco-Maghrebian, but disarmed, with accents that are more naïve, less controlled, and less polished”

(MO 19).¹⁸ Derrida's is a less controlled narrative, because he is at once making a confession, and does not know where the confession will take him. Despite the theatrical and performative setting, his demonstration is "a scene... without a theatre," a scene whose eventfulness is determined by "the extent to which that scene betrays [him]" (MO 72-3). Derrida displaces his own position as autobiographer by confiding in the reader that his self-reflection enfolds simultaneously the familiar and the incalculable. He confesses toward the future, not knowing what or whom he addresses, but constantly thrown against the obstacle to auto-exposition, as if in "a serious traffic accident"¹⁹ about which... [he] never ceases thinking" (MO 70).

In response to the interlocutor that seeks to consolidate his logic, Derrida's confessional answers both affirm and disrupt his thinking, by leading to internal tensions and contradictions that end up subverting their stated goals. Derrida does not extend his efforts to construct the truth about the self, following teleological progression, but leads to some difficult reflections on bearing witness. He does not work toward "an archival independence or autonomy that is quasi-machinelike... a power of repetition, repeatability, iterability, serial and prosthetic substitution of self for self" ("Typewriter" 133). "He has no relation to himself that is not forced to defer itself by passing through the other in the form, precisely, of the eternal return" (Ear 88). Each time Derrida repeats himself to himself, the repetition of the same is bound by alterity and antagonism. The simultaneous return of sameness and difference disrupts "any context as the protocol of

¹⁸ Derrida makes a reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's autobiography titled *Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist* (*Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*) written in 1888 and published in 1908. *Ecce Homo*, to a certain extent provides the context for *Monolingualism*, although Derrida engages with Nietzsche's text more explicitly in *The Ear of the Other*. Written in the double image of the philosopher, *Ecce Homo* serves as a parody of the narcissistic nature of the autobiographical act (Derrida also describes the autobiographical exercise as a narcissistic and compulsive desire in *Acts of Literature*). Deliberately provocative, Nietzsche subverts the conventions of the genre and chronicles the image of "the teacher *par excellence*," (*Ecce* 222) who relates himself to himself through "the *dual* series of experiences... [and the] access to apparently separate worlds... repeated in [his] nature in every respect" (*Ecce* 225). A comparative reading of *Ecce Homo* and *Monolingualism of the Other*, by situating both texts in the tradition of autobiography and placing attention to the figures of "*Doppelgänger*" (*Ecce* 225) in *Ecce Homo* and the interlocutor/or the double interdiction in *Monolingualism*, needs to be developed in a future project.

¹⁹ In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche makes a similar analogy to critique self-certainty/self-presence in the autobiographical act: "I am always equal to accidents: I have to be unprepared to be the master of myself" (*Ecce* 227).

code” (*Limited Inc* 8). The violation of the context provokes the interlocutor, who casts a sceptical eye on Derrida’s position as a thinker, and excludes him from the institution of philosophy. Derrida responds to his marginalization from the discipline of philosophy by calling the interlocutor’s accusations “childish armory”:

Stop. Do not play that trick on us again, please... Certain German or Anglo-American theorists believe they have discovered an unanswerable strategy there. They make a specialty of this puerile weapon... Its mechanism amounts roughly to this: “Ah! So you ask yourself questions about truth. Well, to that very extent, you do not as yet believe in truth; you are contesting the possibility of truth... Come on! You are a skeptic, a relativist, a nihilist; you are not a serious philosopher! If you continue, you will be placed in a department of rhetoric or literature.” (*MO* 4)²⁰

The more the interlocutor accuses him of calling into question the incontestability of truth, or for being an illogical nihilist, the more Derrida wants to illustrate that he abandons the either/or, all/or nothing approach of traditional philosophy that seeks universal answers to eliminate the element of contingency.

As Derrida continues to make a “public declaration” (*MO* 5), the reader grows aware that his is not going to be a demonstration in the sense of revealing what is there: “grant me then that ‘to

²⁰ The reader can almost hear the American speech-act theorist John Searle speaking through the interlocutor. A debate took place between Derrida and Searle following the publication of Derrida’s “Signature Event Context” in volume 1 of the American journal *Glyph* in 1977. Derrida’s argument that “it is always possible that a written communication can function in the absence of a *determinate* receiver” was interpreted by Searle as “absence is necessary for a written text to function” (Dooley 45). Searle accused Derrida’s work of being deprived of intention and a logical chain of thought, and wrote a responsive piece titled “Reiterating the Differences: a Reply to Derrida” in the second volume of the same journal. Derrida, however, does not argue for lack of intention/ality. He writes that “there is... a literary *functioning* and a literary *intentionality*, an experience rather than an essence of literature (natural or historical)” (“Strange” 45). What he calls into question is the possibility of the *telos* and final fulfillment of the intention. The interlocutor echoes Searle with regard to the dogmatic logic he imposes on Derrida’s thinking, claiming his own right to do philosophy by pushing aside Derrida into other fields, namely literature. The rigid distinctions that the interlocutor draws between logical/illogical, philosophical/literary amounts to saying: “We’ll grant you the right to treat philosophy as literature, but you have to forget this business of claiming to be occupied with truth” (*Taste* 9). Searle makes a similar move, as Smith observes in *Derrida and Autobiography*, by appearing “[in the light Derrida casts over him] gratuitously to engage the intrinsically gratuitous force of reason not only *at a theoretical level*, by eliminating so brusquely so much that is contingent... for the sake of the hygiene of his philosophical enquiries. Searle appears also... to want to eliminate *Derrida* from coming anywhere... near the work of J. L. Austin whose legacy Searle believes himself to be the privileged executor of” (31). Searle’s response exemplifies some of the issues Derrida critiques throughout *Monolingualism*, such as the jealous appropriation/ownership of the institution and the language of philosophy, as well as the desire to identify oneself with a fixed set of ideas—a monological structure—by eliminating all contingency.

demonstrate' will also mean something else" (*MO* 6). In conventional autobiographies, demonstration implies the unveiling of truth about the self. By contrast, in *Monolingualism*, demonstration attests to the impossibility of such unveiling. Like the double attempt and failure embodied in the autobiographical act, what is in question here is the impossible gesture of recollecting/restoring a transparent self:

I would like to demonstrate, or, rather than demonstrating it "logically," to restage and recall it as the "cause of effects" [*raison des effets*]. And rather than recalling, to remind myself. Myself. To remind myself, to myself as myself.

What I would like to remind myself of, that to which I would like to recall myself, are the intractable traits [*traits intractables*] of an impossibility, an impossibility so impossible and intractable that it is not far from calling an interdiction to mind. (*MO* 9)

With these statements, Derrida gives the reader a sense of where he is leading us, as he accentuates the contrast between the two interlocutors, one of whom persists on universal answers while the other resists it through the illegible attestation of the self in relation to alterity. Where "meaning is context-bound, but context is boundless," (Culler 123) Derrida cannot give himself to himself, but can only unconditionally "surrender... to language" (*MO* 47). His testimony, in this sense, "resembles a game of blindman's bluff: the one who is writing... holds out his hand like a blind man seeking to touch the one whom he could thank for the gift of language" (*MO* 64). In Derrida's view, only a confession, which is not directed toward a point of arrival, is performative. As he writes, "here is my response to a given situation; if it is a signature, then it too has to be an event" (*Taste* 79). To the extent that the self is entangled with the other in language, the autobiographer no longer confesses himself, but is confessed by the other.²¹

²¹ It is this division of the self in relation to the inexhaustible alterity of the other that makes "something happen to this language" (*MO* 51). As Derrida notes elsewhere, in "Composing 'Circumfession'," "When one confesses, one always confesses the other... There is this division, this divisibility of the confession which structures the confession, so that I never confess myself... a decision is always passive and a decision of the other (a scandal in philosophy)... It is always the other who makes the decision, who cuts—a decision means cutting... For such a cut to occur, someone must interrupt in me my own continuity" (*AP* 25).

As Derrida disturbs the hierarchy between self/other, truth/fiction, he also displaces the primacy of logic over what he calls the “prelogical possibilities of logic” (*Limited Inc* 92). As he writes in *Limited Inc*: “Logic, the logical, the *logos* of logic cannot be a decisive instance here: rather, it constitutes the object of the debate” (92). His goal is not to oppose or overcome the kind of logic represented by the antagonistic interlocutor. He works from within the system he critiques, and pushes the limitations of this uniform logic to the extent that he brings to surface the fissures and the antagonisms within its structure.

Using philosophical language to make a statement, which interrupts the economic reasoning of the philosophical system, Derrida appeals to “propositions” (*MO* 7) and “hypothesis” (*MO* 13) to propose what “the circular law with which philosophy is familiar” (*MO* 11) cannot untangle through inductive reasoning. According to the law of philosophy,

we will affirm then that the one who is *most*, most purely, or most rigorously, most essentially, Franco-Maghrebian would allow us to decipher *what it is to be* Franco-Maghrebian *in general*. We will decipher the essence of the Franco-Maghrebian from the paradigmatic example of the “*most* Franco-Maghrebian,” the Franco-Maghrebian par excellence. (*MO* 11)

Derrida simultaneously offers himself as an example, and calls into question the notion of exemplarity. The logic of exemplarity remains problematic, because it takes the “singular,” and transforms it into “universal,” and then implants hierarchical genealogical trees, centers, peripheries, bridges and so forth. Derrida’s confessional account is rather a “response, a pledge or promise, to make truth, which, if it means anything, is a testimony to what is at once singular and universal” (Kronick 998). By contextualizing his testimony as at once singular (therefore un/verifiable) and universal (contributing to the general notion of Franco-Maghrebian identity), Derrida shows that we can neither exclude ourselves from the system we inhabit and emphasize pure difference, nor subordinate the irreducibility of the contextual to the system. He challenges

the either/or bifurcations, and underlines the oscillation between the singular and the universal, appropriation and expropriation.

Derrida's goal is not that of dismantling the notion of truth altogether, but to remind the reader that every testimony, to the extent that it blurs the borders between truth and fiction, is bound to meet an obstacle on the way to auto-exposition.²² The obstacle is the condition of the dialogic space between self and other. In response to the accusations targeting him, Derrida illustrates that what he aims to do and what he rarely calls "deconstruction (we should once again remind those who do not want to read) is neither negative nor nihilistic" ("Eating Well" 108-9). It is not a technical "operation that would set about furiously dismantling systems," (*Ear* 87) but "a consequence of the fact that the system is impossible; it often consists, regularly or recurrently, in making appear—in each alleged system—a force of dislocation, a limit in the totalization, a limit in the movement of syllogistic synthesis" (*Taste* 4). Derrida takes a position, which is neither yielding to nor rejecting the system; rather, he emphasizes the importance of his testimony.

What Derrida manifests through the emphasis placed on testimony is the space left for future formulations of identity. As he remarks towards the end of *Monolingualism*, "a demonstration is not a logical argumentation that imposes a conclusion" (72). There is no monologic truth about the self to be attained through his autobiographical sketch. What Derrida achieves is at best "a vague *resemblance* to myself and to the kind of autobiographical anamnesis that always appears like the thing to do when one exposes oneself in the space of *relation*" (*MO* 19). The space of relation between Derrida's two interlocutors in *Monolingualism* underlines the

²² Where we think of autobiography as testimony, we also need to join the thinking of truth and fiction for "every constative is rooted in the presupposition of an at least implicit performative [and] assumes a testimonial form... I can always lie and bear false witness, right there where I say to you, "I take you as my witness," "I confess to you," "I tell you the truth" ("Typewriter Ribbon" 111). When Derrida offers his testimony, he makes an ironic remark, which reminds the reader of the necessity and the impossibility of the truthfulness of his account: "Listen, believe me, do not believe so quickly that you are a people, cease listening without protest to those who say 'listen'" (*MO* 34).

entanglement between self and other, but the writing agent no longer knows to whom he relates, and in what ways the rules of this relation can be determined.

The dialogic form of *Monolingualism*, to the extent that it dismantles the authority of a single author/autobiographer, enables Derrida to develop a narrative style, which accommodates some of the generic potential of the Menippean satire. The roots of the Menippean satire reach both into Socratic dialogue and carnivalized folklore. Menippean satire takes its name from the philosopher Menippus of Gadara (third century B.C.) who gave it its classical form, although the term signifies a specific genre introduced by Varro (first century B.C.), the Roman scholar. Bakhtin states that the genre itself arose considerably earlier, and among its first representatives was Antisthenes, Socrates' pupil (*Dostoyevsky's* 112-3). The carnivalization effect of the Menippean satire implies "the destruction of all barriers between genres, between self-enclosed systems of thought, between various styles... [and] any attempt on the part of genres and styles to isolate themselves and ignore one another" (*Dostoyevsky's* 134-5). *Monolingualism* reflects this multi-style narrative as it is at once a theatrical, philosophical and poetic piece of writing, which possesses "sharp contrasts" and "oxymoronic combinations" (*Dostoyevsky's* 118) combined through a dialogic narrative, in the constant dispute between the two voices.

The two interlocutors are like the Janus-face Ka embodies in *Snow*; they amount to the co-habitation and confrontation of antagonistic concepts which do not exclude one another. Derrida multiplies/divides his signature, like Nietzsche, "the philosopher who speaks in the first person while all the time multiplying proper names, masks and signatures" ("Strange" 35). He calls on the traditional philosophical opposition whereby "we have not a peaceful coexistence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), and occupies the commanding position" (*Positions* 56-57/41). Derrida unsettles this violent hierarchy, by laying out aporias and calling attention to the double interdiction at

work in the construction of linguistic, national, and religious identity. Instead of occupying reductive and single-sided taxonomies, he accentuates the circulation, overlap, and divergence, which occur in the boundaries between truth and fiction, self and other, center and margin.

4.2.2 Autobiographical Memory and Hospitality

The way Derrida structures *Monolingualism*, an autobiographical account based on a phony dialogue that disturbs self-presence, shows that he works with the form of the *Bildungsroman*, but manoeuvres it differently. He envisions an anti-*Bildung Bildungsroman*, or an anti-autobiographical autobiography, which resembles “a counter-institutional institution [that] can be both subversive and conservative” (“Strange” 58). Derrida’s account is an attempt to acknowledge and problematize the “blind genealogical impulse” (*MO* 8) in the *Bildungsroman*, which results in the self-enfolding closure of the narrative. In *Monolingualism*, by contrast, “the autobiographical does not overlap with the auto-analytical without limit. Next, it demands a reconsideration of the entire *topos of autos*” (*Post Card* 322). The monologic authority of the *Bildungsroman* author is replaced by the presence of two asymmetrical voices.

The writing self acts both as the addresser and the addressee; it asserts and reaffirms. As Smith writes, “self-representation is first and foremost a matter of the subject telling its story to *itself*: The subject becomes what it is (its essence) by representing itself to itself” (63). Autobiography becomes possible through an initial and “minimal distancing of the self in order to address it” (Smith 63). Derrida “is not together with himself. It is this *divorce*—the word comes to him in his *Tourner autour des mots*—that he pronounces with himself. He addresses himself as a familiar and tells himself: you are with me and I am not with you” (Cixous 121). This echoes Nietzsche’s statement in *Ecce Homo*: “and so I tell my life to myself.” The colloquial mode gives rise to “the temporal (historical) delay implicit” in the vocative mode (Smith 64). As soon as the voice articulates a message, the ear of the other receives the message and responds to it. “The ear

of the other says to me and constitutes the *autos* of my autobiography” (*Ear* 51). The ethical imperative of answering the call of the other in *Monolingualism*’s court-like setting, where a hearing takes place, displaces the autonomy of the writing subject.

What is attained in autobiography is therefore not the knowledge of a self prior to the writing, but an operation that disturbs the *topos* of *autos* in such a way that, “*auto*-affection constitutes the same (*auto*) as it divides the same” (*Of Grammatology* 166-7). It is from this division of the same that an alternative means of perceiving the autobiographical arises. The obstacle makes it impossible for the self to yield to the pressures of the other or to exclude the other from his process of self-identification. The other constitutes the self by marking the division of a self-same ego model. Whereas autobiography is the genre *par excellence* to assume a self-enfolded, autonomous ego model for the author, Derrida’s understanding of autobiography explores the potentialities of language and sustains a relation between self and other. This way of thinking about the self implies not the destruction but a malleable re-inscription of the boundaries separating self and other. A recognition of the tension in between is crucial in understanding what is at stake in Derrida’s confessional account, because it enables us to see a network of entanglements. Rather than approaching self and other as binary opposites, Derrida shows how the two are bound by both their similarities and differences.

Autobiography for Derrida is not so much a genre, but a desire to record everything in the form of testimony. In fact, his own desire to capture every voice implies that he thinks of autobiography as a non-genre, an exercise, which accommodates different styles of writing to capture different histories. In this respect, *Monolingualism* functions as a hybrid text that “is neither philosophic nor poetic. It circulates between these two genres, trying meanwhile to produce another text which would be of another genre or without genre... a graft of several genres” (*Ear* 141). When Derrida is asked to categorize his writings under the domain of a

particular genre in an interview from *The Ear of the Other*, he states that “if one insists on defining genres at all costs, one could refer historically to Menippean satire, to ‘anatomy’ (as in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*), or to something like philosophic parody where all genres—poetry, philosophy, theatre, et cetera—are summoned up at once” (141). He does not invent a new genre; he rather participates in a number of genres while recognizing that “such a participation never amounts to belonging” (“Law of Genre” 230). Just as Derrida participates in Sephardic-Judeo-Algerian-French cultures without ever being attached to any one of these cultural/linguistic references, his writing at once keeps the traces of and betrays a generic belonging. Derrida emphasizes the word “grafting”: “[language is] open to the most radical grafting, open to deformations, transformations, expropriation, to a certain a-nomie and de-regulation” (*MO* 65). The grafting potential of language allows Derrida to cross the boundaries between different generic forms, and to call into question how each genre has a different way of situating the voices it captures. Perhaps one could even argue that Derrida sees language, more than himself, as the agent here. It is as if not to let language cross these generic boundaries, by “maltreating... [it] in its grammar, its syntax, its lexicon,” (*MO* 51) would be a violence toward the “incomprehensible guest” (*MO* 51) that language awaits. To inscribe all the voices within him, including the voice of “a newcomer without assignable origin,” (*MO* 51) Derrida experiments with a cross-generic writing style that provides a habitat for the grafting subjectivities and collectivities.

In addition to other playful autobiographical texts such as “Circumfession,” *Monolingualism* is perhaps one of the most telling examples of the Menippean satire and philosophical parody where the combination of different genres, voices, narrative layers, and fragmented pieces create an effect on the reader that is not dissimilar to the one conjured by the works of Özdamar and Pamuk. Whereas Derrida practices “the trade of the philosophy professor” (*Ear* 141) from an institutional point of view, but is “not simply a philosopher,” (*Ear* 141)

Özdamar and Pamuk practice the trade of the fiction writers even though their works are not simply fictional products. All three writers produce multi-layered texts that combine philosophical and literary inquiry. Whereas Pamuk and Özdamar open up a fictionalized, semi-autobiographical space where a dialogic engagement of various voices challenges the authority of the writer's monologue, Derrida disturbs the *autos* in a quasi-autobiographical exercise, and shifts the focus from the authority of the writer to a relationship with the other, leaving the signature open. Like the lost notebook of poetry that belongs to Ka in *Snow*, which echoes Derrida's confession in "Circumfession" about his unfinished novel, Derrida's narrative strategy tends toward deferrals, which suspend the final meaning sought by the reader when reconstructing the narratives of personal and national identity. Working toward a future narrative not yet found, they write in spliced genres that challenge the authority of any given genre. They work toward entangled genres to accommodate the entanglement of self and other.

What we encounter in Derrida's work is not simply a combination of different genres and narrative layers, but, similar to Özdamar's stories, we find temporal entanglements as well. The autobiographer simultaneously "looks backwards and forward" (Smith 85) in the process of writing; he does not write from within "a temporal desert" (Smith 62). Derrida perceives the act of writing as a work of memory that fails to recover what has been irretrievably lost; it is a kind of mourning of which there remain only the ashes, "a remainder without remainder" (*Points* 208). He treats memory not as a recollection backwards, but as an inexhaustible historical opening to the future. In this sense, the temporal entanglement²³ suspends the borders between life and

²³ The temporal entanglement on which Derrida elaborates owes partly to the "double truth" (*Ear* 15) that retains a tension between life and death in Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. Derrida develops a response to Nietzsche in more explicit terms in his work titled "Otobiographies," where, in the style of an "autobiographical demonstration," (*Ear* 4) he quotes Nietzsche's following words from *Ecce Homo*: "The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother, I am still living and becoming old" (*Ear* 15). Derrida inherits this double game introduced by Nietzsche and writes that "inasmuch as I am and follow after my father, I am the dead man and I am death. Inasmuch as I am and follow after

death. Whereas traditional autobiography focuses on the narrative of a finite life, for Derrida, the obstacle, which the author is exposed to and thrown against, sheds light on the impossibility of a finite autobiography. “The attempt at autobiography, the redoubled but doubly failed attempt to seize the name and ‘be there’ as oneself, entails a deeper involvement with one’s own death” (Smith 72). Derrida perceives autobiography as a practice aligned with writing in *différance*, the not-here and not-now, thereby turning from an ontological understanding of language toward a hauntological understanding of writing, in Spivak’s words, as “the name of the structure inhabited by trace” (“Translator’s Preface” xxxix). The term *différance* alludes to this undecidability of life and death. The death-bearing name is released throughout writing; an autobiography more nearly resembles an autothanatography.²⁴

If “life does not go without death, and that death is not beyond, outside life,” (*Spectres* 141) then

every time I begin to write (the life of) my self, death interposes. Every autobiography is an allegory of the writer’s death, an autobiothanatography... The signature is already an autobiothanatological narrative of the infinite return of an other already in advance of the one who signs. (Kronick 1014)

The infinite return of an other calls into play an implicit delay, which postpones the closure of the autobiographical account. As the border between life and death becomes undecipherable, the autobiographical act can no longer reduce the life term to a coextension of meaning with history; hence, the history of an empirical life cannot be captured in a self-enfolding and complete

my mother, I am life that perseveres; I am the living and the living feminine... This survival is my life” (*Ear* 16). In this respect, every autobiography is also a “heterobiography” (*Ear* 79). From the survival of the living, from this excessive relation between the two chronologies –of the mother and the father– arises “a ‘structure’ of temporal difference, embodied in the child, between the time of the mother and that of the father” (Smith 80).

²⁴ The entanglement of life and death also places emphasis on the complex relationship between an empirical singular life and the structure of the written text. Derrida calls into question “the *dynamis* of that borderline between the ‘work’ and the ‘life’, the system and the subject of the system” (*Ear* 5). What we encounter in the failed attempt in autobiography is not “an invisible or *indivisible* trait lying between the enclosure of philosophemes, on the one hand, and the life of an author already identifiable behind the name, on the other” (*Ear* 5). The borderline between life and work is complicated by their simultaneous and irreducible opening toward the future.

narrative. The past remains open to interpretation in relation to present as well as to future. As Derrida writes, the autobiographical desire “to save in uninterrupted inscription... what happens—or fails to happen” (“Strange” 35) gives rise to an excess: “that which in the autobiographical exceeds the literary genre, the discursive genre, and even the *autos* [the self/same]” (*Taste* 41). Derrida’s autobiography opens a space of writing, “which is more potent than its so-called agents or institutors” (Smith 136). The author’s omnipotent presence becomes replaced by multiple interlocutors and unmourned revenants to whom a hospitable memory must offer welcome, because these interlocutors constitute the self, even if they are contradictory.

Autobiography “carries within itself the law of its displacement, of its internal heterogeneity,” (*Taste* 55) which overflows the boundaries between self and other. By contrast to the hero of the *Bildungsroman*, where every outward movement of the author takes him inward, in *Monolingualism* every inward movement takes Derrida to an “elsewhere” (*MO* 41). An alternate look at autobiography rests on the recognition of this simultaneous inward/outward movement, which calls into question the indisputable self-property of the subject. Derrida sheds light on “the demand [in writing] that a sort of opening, play, indetermination be left, signifying hospitality for what is to come [*l’avenir*]” (*Taste* 31). The remembrance of the future gives rise to a kind of hospitality that dismantles temporal and cultural hierarchies, as well as the essence/supplement dichotomy, by challenging the idea that certain cultural practices within a particular historical moment must be overcome by others.

In contrast to “the experience of an overstepping of limits [or] ‘transgression’” (*MO* 32) we find in the *Bildungsroman*, Derrida, like Özdamar and Pamuk, emphasizes the “unleashed, surging wave” of memory, which “ebbs and flows... swells, sweeps along, and enriches itself with everything, carries away, brings back, deports and becomes swollen again with what it has dragged away” (*MO* 31). The wave analogy enables us to perceive history as developing in self-

generating complexity, not in terms of overcoming or transcending linearity. It also provides us with a more malleable picture of subjectivities and collectivities, which resurge in response to one another, like “a wave that appropriates even that to which, enfolding itself, it seems to be opposed” (*MO* 46-7). The definitive boundaries between the seemingly cultural and political dichotomies such as the Western/central and anti-Western/marginal identity models remain more supple than rigid as Derrida disputes history’s logocentrism and orders of subordination, and instead promotes a dynamic view of the temporal and cultural inflows.

4.3 *Nostalgeria*

4.3.1. Derrida, the Exemplary Franco-Maghrebian

In my discussion of *Monolingualism* so far, I focussed on form to give the reader a better understanding of the text’s framework and narrative structure. As form and content are interwoven in Derrida’s work, a look at the dialogic engagement of Derrida’s interlocutors on a stylistic level can help us understand the several voices that come into play as Derrida begins to discuss his position as a Franco-Maghrebian.

In the opening pages of *Monolingualism*, Derrida classifies the French speakers he met at the colloquium in Louisiana into three categories: Francophone French speakers who are not Maghrebian (from France); Francophones who are neither French nor Maghrebian (Swiss, Canadians, Belgians etc.); and, French-speaking Maghrebians who have never been French citizens (Moroccans, Tunisians) (*MO* 12-13). As Derrida does not fall under any of the categories outlined above, he turns to his friend Abdelkebir Khatibi and makes the following ironic remark: “You see, dear Abdelkebir, between the two of us, I consider myself to be the *most* Franco-Maghrebian, and perhaps even the *only* Franco-Maghrebian here” (*MO* 12). Derrida contrasts himself to Khatibi, who was born into a household where Arabic was the primary language, and he further refers to Khatibi, who speaks of his mother tongue Arabic in another language, “in

French, precisely... In order to say of his mother tongue that—and that is a little personal secret!—it has ‘lost’ him” (*MO* 35). For Derrida, who grew up speaking French with his mother, what the “mother tongue” represents is a more complex matter:

–Picture this, imagine someone who would cultivate the French language...
Someone whom the French language would cultivate...
Now suppose, for example, that one day this subject of French culture were to tell you in good French:
“I only have one language; it is not mine.” (*MO* 1)

The opening lines of *Monolingualism* prepare the reader for the first obstacle, for the first manifestation of the double bind we are about to encounter, but what does it mean for this Franco-Maghrebian to have only one language, which is not his? It is necessary here to begin by calling into question what Derrida refers to as the “historical unity of *a* France and *a* Maghreb,” and to explore what “the silence of that hyphen does not pacify or appease” (*MO* 12).

Born in El-Biar, near Algiers, in 1930, Derrida spent the first four years of his life in Rue Saint-Augustin (*Jacques* 325). Derrida’s family had first migrated to Algeria as part of the French-speaking Sephardic Jewish community from Spain (*Jacques* 325), and had been given French citizenship by *Décret Crémieux* in 1870. Yet, after being French citizens for over half a century, the same community was deprived of their citizenship between 1941 and 1943, in the midst of the Nazi occupation of France, without “*gaining back any other citizenship. No other*” (*MO* 15). The loss of citizenship, without gaining another, defines the first exilic experience of Derrida. Although, as he writes, “citizenship does not define a cultural, linguistic, or, in general, historical participation. It does not cover all these modes of belonging,” (*MO* 14) it is also “not some superficial or superstructural predicate floating on the surface of experience” (*MO* 14). When the state recognized Derrida’s citizenship anew in 1943, he had still never been to France. This reference to citizenship at the beginning of *Monolingualism* sets the tone for the rest of the

book, as it alludes to both the fantasy of a motherland, which Derrida grew up with, and the exile he experienced on linguistic and cultural levels.

The loss of French citizenship by the French-speaking Jews of Algeria implied that:

[b]eing already strangers to the roots of French culture, even if that was their only acquired culture, their only educational instruction, and, especially, their only language, being strangers, still more radically, for the most part, to Arab or Berber cultures, the greater majority of these young indigenous Jews remained, in addition, strangers to Jewish culture. (*MO* 53)

Derrida was Jewish but did not speak Hebrew or Yiddish (the language of the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe); he grew up in Algeria, but did not speak either Arabic or Berber (the native languages of Algeria). He was a Jew estranged from his religious community, due to the anti-Semitism in the pro-Nazi regime, yet neither did he belong to the group of “Algerians proper, in the sense of coming from the indigenous Arab, Berber, Kabyle, Chaouia, or Mزابite peoples that make up the population of modern independent Algeria” (Young 414). It is as if from the very beginning, Derrida carried the traces of all these cultures and languages, from French to Berber, without being able to claim outright one of them as his own.

Derrida’s position resembles that of Özdamar in the sense that they are both exiled from and continue to interact with the multiple linguistic and cultural references available to them. However, there is a subtle difference in the way they articulate their relationship to language. Whereas Özdamar underlines her narrator’s ability to participate in several languages without belonging to any one of them, and draws on a collage of languages—which variously overlap and diverge—to critique linguistic purism, Derrida emphasizes the aporia of language: “... I only have one language, yet it is not mine” (*MO* 2-4). Unlike Özdamar, he does not montage different linguistic elements on one another in order to contaminate language, and to allow for impossible translations to take place through code-switching. Instead Derrida focuses on his own impure desire for purity. He draws attention to the double interdiction conditioned by the simultaneous

desire and failure of achieving linguistic purism, and by extension, linguistic and cultural identity. I will discuss Derrida's desire for "impure purity" in detail in the following section, but for the moment being, I will dwell on his background to better comprehend the estrangement he felt when growing up in Algeria in the 40s, because his experiences helped shape Derrida's current philosophical views.

The first "wound," as far as Derrida recalls, was inflicted on him when he was expelled from school on the first day of the school year in 1942 for being Jewish. Following his expulsion from *lycée*, his parents enrolled Derrida in a Jewish school in Algiers. Ironically, it was during this time spent with only Jewish teachers and students that Derrida began to feel estranged from Jewish culture. It was not simply the pro-Nazi regime that repulsed him, but also the sense of attachment that was forced on him among the Jewish community in reaction to the pro-Nazi regime. As he puts it, "through that wound there was ensconced in me a certain conscious-unconscious way of looking at intellectual matters—at culture and the language problem... a configuration that later on would come to be called intellectual, and even ideological, had already taken shape" (*Taste* 39). This intellectual-ideological position could be defined as the double bind, which surfaces in Derrida's discussion of a number of issues from language to religion. In this context, it is the simultaneous detachment he feels for both the pro-Nazi French and the Jewish community in reaction to the sudden segregation of the religious and ethnic groups that once lived together.

Yet, as Derrida remarks, his growing sense of alienation toward French culture began even before his expulsion from the *lycée*. Growing up in Algeria in the 40s and 50s, when it was declared a province of the French State, unlike other North African colonies of France, Derrida participated in an education system, which repeatedly asserted that his motherland was France and his mother tongue French, despite the fact that "[he] had still never gone 'to France'" (*MO*

16). Although Algeria was a province of France—“Algeria *is* France” was a French slogan during the Algerian war of independence (Stora 30)—the education system made it quite apparent that the universal humanistic discourse of the French Revolution and its principles of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* had not reached the Algerian shores. Not only had the languages spoken in Algeria such as Arabic and Berber disappeared from the school curriculum, but Algeria’s physical presence on the world map was ghostly:

As some people have already begun to do here and there, we could also “recount” infinitely what was being “recounted” to us about, precisely, the “history of France...” not a word about Algeria, not a single one concerning its history and its geography, whereas we could draw the coast of Brittany and the Gironde estuary with our eyes closed. (*MO* 44)

During those years, the interdict, which silenced the Algerian and Jewish communities, was in every aspect of life, but most visibly in the spoken languages. Whereas French and Latin were obligatory in schools, Arabic was offered as an optional course along with English and German. Berber was not even mentioned. No one but a very few young French Algerians took the option of learning Arabic whereas the majority including Derrida himself “submitted passively to the interdict” (*MO* 38).

As Derrida recalls, the “pedagogical mechanism [*dispositif pédagogique*]” (*MO* 37) under the authority of National Education functioned by offering, and therefore permitting, the study of Arabic as an optional foreign language in Algeria, although this never amounted to encouraging it. The lack of access to the Arabic language—as a common tongue that could be spoken by all Algerians—created a simultaneous sense of affinity and distance between the young Arabs, Jews, and Kabyles who lived “very near and infinitely far away” (*MO* 37):

Given all the colonial censorships—especially in the urban and suburban milieu where I lived—and given all the social barriers there, the racisms, a now grimacing, now “happy go lucky” xenophobia... given the disappearance, then in progress, of Arabic as the official, everyday, administrative language... the one and only option was still the school, and the study of Arabic was restricted to the school, but as an alien language... of the other... For

me, it was the neighbor's language. For I lived on the edge of an Arab neighborhood, at one of those hidden frontiers [*frontières de nuit*], at once visible and impassable. (MO 37)

Growing up in the midst of all these languages and censorships denied Derrida a sense of belonging that was entirely monolingual and monocultural. Although French was the only language he ever spoke when growing up, he felt an increasing sense of estrangement toward French language, as if “translation translate[d] itself in an internal (Franco-French) translation by playing with the non-identity with itself of all language,” (MO 65) leaving its “phantomical map ‘inside’ the said monolanguage” (MO 65). If language is indeed to be considered one of the main determinants of national identity, then the first complication in Derrida's life begins with regard to this uncertain relationship between language and motherland.

French was the phantasm of a distant mother figure, a stepmother tongue, as German was to Özdamar's narrator who tries to come to terms with a Turkish mother tongue and an Arabic grandfather tongue. When Derrida recalls the several languages spoken in Algeria, he questions his relation to the languages that were available to him, and to those that were forbidden or permitted without being encouraged. Despite the fact that French was his “only mother tongue,” (Taste 38) and he would feel lost and condemned outside the French language, while still a child he had the sensation that this language was not his own:

This was not just because I belonged to a Jewish family, of Spanish origin, present in Algeria even before the French colonization, but also because... the manner in which French language was taught, the norms of “proper” speaking and writing, the references to literature, all made it pretty clear that the model was in France—and not just in France, but in Paris. (Taste 38)

As he remarks, “unlike in the tradition into which Khatibi was born, my mother herself did not, anymore than myself, speak a language that one could call ‘entirely’ maternal” (MO 36). Derrida remained “on the shores of French Language, not inside or outside” (MO 57) the French model of “*bien-parler* and *bien-écrire*” (Taste 38).

Whereas Khatibi speaks of his mother tongue in French to assert that it has lost him in translation, Derrida targets the “Frenchifying” (*MO* 53) effect of his primary language French, critiquing the language he has inhabited since his birth. Derrida remains simultaneously attached to and detached from the French language, hence finding himself in a double bind. His alienation from French shows that even primary or mother tongue does not provide a sense of being at home in language. That there is no one proper language to which he can translate from French, and purify his tongue of the Frenchifying effect, implies that even in one’s primary language, there is no escape from the exilic nature of language. This is different from the sense of exile that Khatibi feels when he speaks of his mother tongue Arabic in French, underlining the exile between one’s native and acquired tongue, or between what Derrida refers to as countable languages, for Khatibi still speaks with the hope of saving or returning to the home in the Arabic language. For Derrida, the exile is beyond the difference opened up by countable languages; he points to our condition of inhabiting and being exiled from language in more general terms, in our monolingualism to be more precise. For him, there is no neutral metalanguage to provide us with the means of expressing this alienation outside the alienating effect of language for “one cannot speak of a language except in that language” (*MO* 22). There is no final translation to lead us “home.”

I am monolingual. My monolingualism dwells, and I call it my dwelling, it feels like one to me, and I remain in it and inhabit it. It inhabits me... It is impassible, *indisputable*: I cannot challenge it except by testifying to its omnipresence in me. It would always have preceded me. It is me. For me, this monolingualism is me... It constitutes me, it dictates even the ipseity of all things to me, and also prescribes a monastic solitude for me; as if, even before I speak, I had been bound by some vows. This inexhaustible solipsism is myself before me. Lastingly. (*MO* 1-2)

I stated in the introduction that in his critique, Derrida reveals the fissures within a system to dismantle its rigid boundaries and intact nature, but he also recognizes the impossibility of escaping the system. Similarly here, he indicates both the sense of detachment he feels toward

language, and states that we cannot step outside our monolingualism. If there is no metalanguage, but the “relays of metalanguage within language,” (MO 22) then the “I” never precedes the pre-egological ipseity of language. As we shall see, this impossibility of speaking outside language does not have negative implications.

The fact that the only language Derrida speaks alienated him implies that, “this abiding “alienation” [*aliénation à demeure*] appears, like “lack,” to be constitutive... it lacks nothing that precedes or follows it, it alienates no *ipseity*, no property, and no self that has ever been able to represent its watchful eye” (MO 25). The abiding sense of alienation is embedded in the relation between self and language. As Derrida adds, “this structure of alienation without alienation... [is] the origin of our responsibility,” (MO 25) because it reminds us that there is no one transparent self and no one neutral language to/from which we can translate the image of a stable self. As Derrida notes, “from all viewpoints, which are not just grammatical, logical, or philosophical, it is well known that the *I* of the kind of anamnesis called autobiographical, the I [*je-me*] of *I recall* [*je me rappelle*] is produced and uttered in different ways depending on language in general” (MO 29). Identity thus can be seen as a malleable habitat molded into different shapes through the diverse uses of language, whether it be a number of different national languages, idioms or an array of poetic experimentations.

Because “I” never precedes language, “it is not independent of language in general” (MO 29). The truth about the self cannot transcend linguistic differences. This way of thinking about the relation between self and language disturbs us in the present, as it reveals the limitations brought upon by the compulsive attachment to an immutable linguistic and national identity. Derrida confesses his own inability to claim a place of origin, by making the following remark:

For never was I able to call French, this language I am speaking to you, “my mother tongue.” These words do not come to my mouth; they do not come out of my mouth. I leave to others the words “my mother tongue...” My culture was right away a political

culture. "My mother tongue" is what they say, what they speak; as for me, I cite and question them... if they indeed know what... they are talking about. Especially when, so lightly, they celebrate "fraternity." At bottom, brothers, the mother tongue, and so forth pose the same problem. (*MO* 34)

As Derrida writes, the claim to ownership of mother tongue points to a desire for property in a broader sense. There is a social/communal security that derives from belonging to a language, and by extension, to fraternities and nations, where the speakers pretend that like citizenship and land, language too is an entity that "belongs" to the human and is hers/his to manipulate when creating cultural as well as socio-economic divisions and occluding boundaries. By contrast to such claims of ownership, Derrida places emphasis on the irreducible transformative power and heterogeneity of language, which disturbs self-relation, and reminds us of the structural limits of our possession of linguistic purity.

Through a study of the originary alienation in language, which both makes possible the identification process and places an obstacle in the way of an all-encompassing self-same model of identity, Derrida develops a malleable view of existing in language. The metaphor of the obstacle that Derrida employs, and to which I have been referring throughout this chapter, may appear to have a negative connotation like the metaphor of entanglement that I use in shaping my discussion in this dissertation. It is crucial for me to underline here, once again, that the obstacle potentially enfolds both negative and positive consequences, because it conditions our responsibility to define ourselves in relation to the other within the grafting capacity of language.

It is possible to view this condition as a threat, which must be kept inactive through the occlusion of rigid boundaries between self and other; this is, for example, obvious in the way, as Derrida writes, how some groups celebrate fraternities so lightly. However, Derrida conceives of the same condition as a promise, and proposes that the reader take advantage of the lack of a neutral language and transparent ego model. If there is no master who can dictate which language

belongs to us and which belongs to the other, then language can no longer be a means of belonging to or being excluded from a group. Rather it is a creative field that enables us to be an “other.” We are not indebted to our “national” or “mother” tongues and identities more so than we are to any other language/identity. Just as Özdamar’s narrator in “Mother Tongue” reconciles three languages (Arabic, German, Turkish) to assume the responsibility of all the cultures she inherits through these languages, Derrida states that despite his “neurotic” (*MO* 56) relationship with French, at times his favourite is Arabic, in the poetic solemnity of chant or prayer.

The interdependency of language and identity can also be understood in the context of the relationship between language and “acculturation.” The reader will recall that in Özdamar’s story titled “Mother Tongue,” the narrator’s relationship to language is very corporeal. When Özdamar’s narrator makes an attempt to remember where and how she lost her mother tongue Turkish, she recalls feeling a razor blade pierce through her body, symbolic of the German language that she appropriated. In another instance, she experiences a physical response to the Arabic language, which awakes the sleeping animals in her, as her “body opens like a pomegranate cut open in the middle” (*MO* 31). Both for Özdamar and Derrida, language has an almost physical effect on the speaker. In *Monolingualism*, Derrida uses descriptions similar to Özdamar’s when referring to the French language as a force that has “harpooned” his body like

wooden or metallic darts [*flèches*], a penetrating body of enviable, formidable, and inaccessible words even when they were entering me, sentences which it was necessary to appropriate, domesticate, coax [*amadouer*], that is to say, love by setting on fire... perhaps destroy, in all events mark, transform, prune, cut, forge... (*MO* 50-1)

As the French language penetrates his body, Derrida takes on the role of a martyr, whose body serves as a palimpsest on which the French culture is inscribed: “We speak here of martyrdom and passion in the strict and quasi-etymological sense of these terms. And when we mention the body, we are naming the body of language and writing, as well as what makes them a thing of the

body” (MO 27). The French language inscribed on Derrida’s body leaves the imprints of both the scars of postcolonial violence written over the body of the colonial subjects—“the structure appears in the experience of the injury, the offense, vengeance, and the lesion... and sometimes collective assassinations” (MO 26)—and of the French literature inscribed on the body of his work.

The fact that Derrida speaks of his primary language, French, as yet another product of acculturation among others, invites the reader to re-visit the notion of a pure linguistic/national identity as opposed to one that is contaminated by cultural, geographical and linguistic border-crossing. If even what we call a mother tongue is inscribed on the body, and comes from the other, the boundary between foreign and native becomes complicated. Derrida articulates the exilic and supplemental nature of all languages and cultures, including the maternal/originary. At this point, we must ask again: what does it mean to be a Franco-Maghrebian for Derrida? If what we call our mother tongue is merely a culture among others, as Derrida asks, “Who then *are we*? Where do we find ourselves? With whom can we still *identify* in order to affirm our own identity and to tell ourselves our own history?” (MO 55). If there is no “*testimonial deus ex machina*,” (Religion 28) which can give access to a “possible habitat without the difference of this exile and this nostalgia,” (Ear 58) “what status must be assigned to this exemplarity of re-mark? How do we interpret the history of an example that allows the re-inscription of the structure of a universal law upon the body of an irreplaceable singularity in order to render it thus remarkable?” (MO 26).

In order to be able to provide an answer to these questions, I will return to a discussion of the possibilities and the limitations brought upon the autobiographical *récit*, by keeping in mind Derrida’s view of language. Because the constitutive alienation/exile in language marks an inherent division or cut, which puts into play an ongoing process of identification without closure, Derrida goes on to argue in *Monolingualism* that the “autobiographical anamnesis

presupposes *identification*. And precisely not identity... an identity is never attained; only... the indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures" (*MO* 28). Autobiography is thus aligned with a kind of *écriture*, which simultaneously inherits and disinherits the self.²⁵ The testamentary structure is informed by this structural division. Derrida develops a lens through which to perceive autobiography not in relation to a naïve self-quest, but a practice wherein the "I" remains in constant encounter with an obstacle, which constitutes the playful form of autobiography. Derrida asserts that "all forms of identity are auto-immune in that they never completely close in on themselves" (Dooley 142). This auto-immunity can be understood both as a promise and a risk, because it opens the self to the other in an unconditional and incalculable relationship, inviting both confrontation and negotiation.

Rather than a self-enfolded ego, the author faces the challenge of extending "a promise that no longer expects what it waits for" (*MO* 73). It is this illegibility of the self at the face of the other that makes it challenging for Derrida to give a clear response to the question he posed at the beginning of *Monolingualism* regarding what it means to be a Franco-Maghrebian. In traditional autobiographies, "in whatever manner one invents the story of a construction of the *self*, the *autos*, or the *ipse*, it is always imagined that the one who writes should know how to say *I*" (*MO* 28). It would be easy for Derrida to move toward this direction, and to claim French as his mother tongue, and French culture as his only origin. But an examination of his personal history, concealed in the hyphen, works more toward unsettling his self-relation than supporting it.

²⁵ This playful process can also be understood with regard to Derrida's discussion of the Freudian game *fort/da* in *The Post Card*. As part of this game, the child plays with a spool, repeating an operation which consists in distancing the object in order to observe that he brings it back. During this "economic return," as Derrida puts it, the signifying event is a substitute. What matters is not the object of desire, but the desire itself, which propels a movement between *need* and *distance*, appropriation and expropriation. According to Derrida, "every autobiography is the departure [and] return of a *fort-da*," (*Post Card* 322) because the autobiographical desire puts into play a similar oscillation between inheritance and disinheritance of the self. "The autobiography *of the writing* posits and deposits simultaneously, in the same movement, the psychoanalytic movement" (*Post Card* 303).

Carrying the imprints of Jewish, Maghrebian, and French cultures, and not belonging to any of them, Derrida fails to encapsulate the image of an *exemplary* Franco-Maghrebian. The hyphen does not so much invoke the “historical unity of *a* France and *a* Maghreb,” which need to be bridged together, as serves as a network of entangled filiations, which enable him to move away from the monoculturalist hegemony of French colonialism and Algerian nationalism, both of which, in their different ways, invest in the dream of the proper, and in the fantasy of linguistic, cultural, and national purity.

In *Monolingualism*, we do not encounter a voice that fulfills the “dreamed-of desire of a purely idiomatic voice that would be what it is” (*Points* 136). Instead what we find in *Monolingualism* is an autobiographer, who cannot settle accounts with his primary language, and whose writing consists of “tensions and the play of forces, of the jealous, vindictive, and hidden *physis*” (*MO* 31). The goal of Derrida’s testimonial account is precisely that of revealing the suggested tensions and play of forces at work. Mourning for the perpetual loss of the name, Derrida faces the ongoing task of re-positioning himself in language, by calling into question an *écriture*, which “would indicate, among other things, a certain mode of loving and desperate appropriation of language and through it a forbidding as well as forbidden speech (for me, the French language was both)” (*MO* 33). Between appropriation and expropriation of the one language he speaks, he construes a narrative about the self, “reinventing it, finally giving it a form (deforming, reforming, and transforming it),” (*MO* 33) whose secret “no other person could really appropriate. Not even I, who would, however, be in on the secret. I must still dream about it, in my ‘nostalgia’” (*MO* 52). Derrida’s nostalgia for Algeria does not take him to a safe and enfolded origin of any kind, but it conditions the desire, hence the possibility for deforming and reforming the self in the crevices of language.

Derrida invites us to think of the self in relation to its position in language. As Smith notes, with Derrida's conception of autobiography, "the human must be reformulated according to the very thing which exceeds it," (Smith 191) that is, according to the infinite possibilities made available through language. The responsibility of re-positioning oneself in language requires that one be cautious in surrendering to it.

I have never ceased learning, especially when teaching, to speak softly, a difficult task for a "pied noir..." to ensure that this soft-spokenness reveal the reserve of what is thus held in reserve... contained by the floodgate, a precarious floodgate that allows one to apprehend the catastrophe. The worst can happen in every turn. (*MO* 47-8)

Because Derrida mentions the words floodgate and catastrophe, his statement may seem to have a negative connotation, but he is pointing to the simultaneous limitations and possibilities opened up by language. For example, when he writes in French, he no longer knows "what will happen to me or what awaits me at the end of a sentence, neither *who* nor *what* awaits whom or what, I am within this promise or this threat" of language (*MO* 22). There is the risk of both a promise and a threat, because language is a place where "'being home' [*son 'chez elle'*]" disturbs the co-inhabitants" (*MO* 57). It is our responsibility to turn this "disturbance" in the divided body of language into a promise, a kind of empowerment.

The constitutive lack of mother tongue/origin provides Derrida with a positive perspective, because it means that we can and tend to use language to transform and re-invent selfhood in a way that overwhelms the hierarchical boundaries between imagined collectivities. Similar to Özdamar who suggests that there is no one history and no one neutral language to give expression to it, Derrida writes that we are "thrown into absolute translation without a pole of reference, without an originary language and a source language" (*MO* 69). Given the situation in which there is no source language from which to depart *towards* an arrival point, there are multiple histories that can be articulated in a number of ways through "target languages" (*MO*

69). The never-ending drift or sliding of meaning that turns history into an open book suggests that all language is the language of the other. As the autobiographical voice re-positions itself in language, the “T” forms itself “at a site always referring elsewhere... to another language... It would have *located* [*situé*] itself in a *nonlocatable* [*insituable*] experience of *language*” (MO 29). Thus every time Derrida writes a word, he is exiled from the one language he speaks, and calls out: “Compatriots of every country, translator-poets, rebel against patriotism!” (MO 57).²⁶ Derrida’s rebellion is against essentialist notions of identity, and works toward promoting the transformative power of language and narrative in constructing malleable subjectivities.

As Jean-Luc Nancy remarks, “the exigency of the originary, the related exigency to (re)make a language—all this opens up an abyss in front of a subject. The subject can then either be sucked down into it or, on the contrary, draw a renewed strength from it; but in no case can he simply leap over the abyss or fill it up” (Fabbri 211). Given the choice of being sucked down by the excess of language or to draw strength from it, Derrida chooses the latter. He utilizes this excess in challenging the notion of ownership and other forms of communal/patriotic belonging, and in reminding us of the ever-shifting patterns of identity that arise through the narratives we construct.

The failed “attempt to restore the language” (MO 33) is precisely what makes the invention of new narratives possible. Derrida plays “on the etymology of the word invention (*in-*

²⁶ Derrida writes that every time he dwells in his monolingualism, he is singing “the song of this new International” (MO 57). In *Spectres of Marx*, he refers to the “new International” as “the friendship of an alliance without institution among those who, even if they no longer believe or never believed in the socialist-Marxist International, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the messianic-eschatological role of the universal union of the proletarians of all lands, continue to be inspired by at least one of the spirits of Marx or Marxism and in order to ally themselves, in a new, concrete, and real way, even if this alliance no longer takes the form of a party or a workers’ international, but rather of a kind of counter-conjuration in the critique of the state of international law” (86). We could read the appearance of the “new International” in *Monolingualism* as a call out to the cosmopolitanism Derrida discusses in detail in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*.

venire) both in the sense of ‘making something new’ and as ‘in-coming of the other’” (Dooley 109). To invent alternative subjectivities/collectivities does not mean to replace old rigid models of identification with new rigid models, but to place critical attention on the process of identification, which brings the self and the other into a space of relation. It is this space of relation, which gives rise to more productive ways of perceiving the social and political interactions around us in terms of their interwoven threads.

In *Monolingualism*, Derrida elaborates on the limitations of the “exemplarity” of his identity as a Franco-Maghrebian to cast a doubtful eye on intact notions of personal as well as national and linguistic identity. Through his testimony, he invokes a malleable lens through which to conceive of the identification process in relation to the potential future re-formulations of identity that display a tendency to arise from the entanglement with the other. In the following section, I will continue to examine the consequences of thinking about this creative dis-adjustment at the heart of identity in the context of the colonizer-colonized hierarchy in post-colonial Algeria, and in the polyglot formations of Algerian identity.

4.3.2 Colonial Fantasies

When recalling his childhood education, Derrida makes the following remark in

Monolingualism:

I do not doubt that exclusion—from the school reserved for young French citizens—could have a relationship to the disorder of identity... I do not doubt either that such “exclusions” come to leave their mark upon this belonging or non-belonging *of* language, this affiliation *to* language... But who exactly possesses it? And whom does it possess? (16-17)

As I discussed in the previous section, Derrida repeatedly reminds us of how he fails to possess such an affiliation to language. Yet at the same time, in order to be able to write at all, he admits that he would have to accept a certain mode of desperate appropriation of language. My goal in this section is to continue to raise questions as to who produces narratives of ownership and

colonialism under a kind of pretence. I will examine how Derrida's extensive critique of the property of language problematizes the colonizer/colonized dichotomy of the French-Algerian relationship, and proposes to analyze the tensions embedded between the two.

My focus will be on how different groups, both French and Algerian, attach themselves to intact ethnic, national and colonial identities, by claiming possession of the different languages that are made to represent their group identity. Similar to Pamuk, who marks the different political groups' attachment to inflexible national identities through their imaginary relationship to the "West," Derrida uses the authoritarian attachment to national languages as a platform from which to critique the conflicts between France and Algeria. The ideological struggles that take place through language indicate that "inside languages there is a terror, soft and discreet, or glaring; that is our subject" (*MO* 23). This terror takes place on two levels: first, on a "typological or taxonomical" (*MO* 62) level, through the monolingual purity imposed by the language of the other as the language of the colonizer; second, on a "more legibly political" (*MO* 62) level, through "the language of the other... entirely other than the language of the other as the language of the master or colonist," although the two may sometimes show "unsettling resemblances" (*MO* 62). I will first expound on the typological alienation, which is exemplified by Khatibi's position as a Franco-Maghrebian who has access to his "presumed mother tongue" (*MO* 62) and yet, as an Arab writer of French expression, feels "caught in a chiasmus between alienation and inalienation" (*MO* 63). In order to understand what Khatibi means by the "chiasmus," I will briefly address the history and the reception of Franco-Maghrebian writing in Algeria.

Prior to French colonialism, as Kaye points out in *The Ambiguous Compromise*, "many, or even most, of these [Maghrebian] countries had no literatures at all. That is, they had no printed books composed of sequential narrative prose or discrete individual poetic utterances, although their cultures may have been rich in oral composition of great beauty and diversity" (1-2).

Despite the existence of oral literary tradition in Arabic and Berber, the transition from oral to print culture occurred during the time of colonialization and Frenchification, which meant that a big part of the literature produced in the aftermath of the colonial take-over of the Maghreb was produced in the French language. Some critics justify this turn to the French language in part through the absence of a substantial readership in Arabic or Berber, considering the high rate of illiteracy in Algeria. This implies that along with colonization came a literary culture, which targeted or addressed the readers of French expression. As Derrida remarks in *Monolingualism*, “just after the landing of the Allies forces in North Africa in November 1942, we witnessed the constitution of a sort of literary capital of France in exile at Algiers” (*MO* 50). The discovery of French literature marked for several people, like Derrida, the discovery of “Literature” in a general sense.

As Bensmaïa points out, however, the increasing engagement with literature in French did not stop the Francophone Algerian writers from confronting some difficult questions:

[F]or Franchophone writers, the questions remained the same: to write, of course, but in which language? To write, but *for whom?* The question that Jean-Paul Sartre asked in his *What is literature?* (1947) became a tragic problem in a culture that had no real audience for literature. (4-5)

In a way, Franchophone Algerian literature was regarded as an abiding negative consequence of the French colonialization. The idea of an Algerian Literature written in French was a contradiction at best. The common feeling was that along with Algeria’s independence, these same writers would somehow restore their “real” voice by returning to their “proper” language/s prior to the French influence. By the same token, the Tunisian writer-sociologist Albert Memmi prophesied that North African Francophone literature was destined to die in the aftermath of the liberation (Marx-Scouras 534).

Memmi was both right and wrong in anticipating a “return” to the native culture and the Arabization of the Maghreb in the years of decolonization. On the one hand, “the *F.L.N.* (*Front de Libération Nationale*, National Liberation Front)²⁷ proclaimed that the moment had come to organize and reorganize cultural disciplines along [Arab-Islamic] socialist lines” (Monego 147-8). While there was a great attempt to restore national literary and cultural life through a number of institutions—in 1963, the Union of Algerian Writers was founded; this was followed by the National Cultural Colloquium held in Algiers in 1968 (Monego 146)—all these initiations came under the shadow of the *FLN*’s oppressive bureaucratic socialism. Its interference in literary life in the aftermath of the Algerian War, revealed “a structural problem of global proportions that would have the effect, in the newly independent nation, of defeating the Algerians who had revolted against colonialism” (Woodhull, *Transfigurations* xv). The same group of writers, the Generation of 52, who critiqued the universalizing values of Western European culture prior to liberation, were now frustrated with the repressive Arab-Islamic socialism of the *FLN* and found themselves in the midst of a revolution gone astray.

On the other hand, the pressure and violence received from both sides—Western colonialism and Arab-Islamic nationalism—gave rise to a wide range of linguistic and cultural expression, which Memmi could not foresee. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a sudden literary revival in the French language. It is in this period that, as Woodhull notes, that the most interesting and productive North African theoretical and literary texts came into production. These works eschewed “the notion of a pre-colonial Maghrebian cultural essence at the same time as they chart[ed] a new historical course that carries reflection beyond the quest for a national identity” (“Postcolonial” 213). Although Derrida’s first language is French, hence he

²⁷ The *FLN* led Algeria’s war of independence between 1954 and 1962. Following the revolution, it ruled in Algeria until the transition to the multi-party system in 1989.

cannot allude to a lost maternal tongue and culture prior to colonization, *Monolingualism*, in terms of its argument, can be seen as existing in continuity with these texts that offer a double critique of both the imperializing reason of the West, and the repression of Arab-Islamic institutions and Algerian nationalism.

The question of writing in French, and writing in a way that sustains this double critique, is a major concern for writers like Khatibi who experience alienation from language on a typological/taxonomical level. But Derrida also makes an important point in reference to the particular situation experienced by Khatibi. He argues that the dualism between “mother tongue Arabic” and “colonial tongue French” experienced by many Maghrebian writers sets a trap, because such dualism keeps the Maghrebian writers of French expression from articulating their shifting geopolitical identities. According to Derrida, there is no master, but there is the artifice of a master:

[T]he master ...[can] possess exclusively, and *naturally*, what he calls his language... only in the course of an unnatural process of politico-phantasmatic constructions... [he can] pretend historically, through the rape of a cultural usurpation, which means always essentially colonial, to appropriate it in order to impose it as “his own.” (*MO* 23)

The pretense of possession, for Derrida, is the first trick that is played with language from the perspective of the colonizer. The second trick is played by the colonized:

Liberation, emancipation, and revolution will necessarily be the second trick. It will provide freedom from the first while confirming a heritage by internalizing it, by reappropriating it—but only up to a certain point, for, as my hypothesis shows, there is never any such thing as absolute appropriation or reappropriation. (*MO* 24)

Derrida calls attention to the colonized culture’s appropriation of the legacy of the “mother tongue” in response to the possession of French by the “master.” He argues that this mutual political struggle, expressed through the attachment of both the colonizer and the colonized to a symbolic language, gives rise to a bifurcation that runs short of articulating the creative and hybrid space occupied by postcolonial French-Algerian writers.

While Derrida is careful to expose “the homo-hegemony of dominant languages... of capital and machines” (MO 30) and the “traumatizing brutality of what is called modern colonial war,” (MO 39) he also underlines his scepticism as to “whether salvation for the other presupposes the salvation of the idiom” (MO 30). In addition to arguing for a careful preservation of every voice captured in diverse idioms and languages, Derrida challenges the idea that the salvation of the singularity of the other lies in the return to defensive identitarian purism and the authoritarian attachment to/identification with the mother tongue. While his friend Khatibi speaks of his mother tongue in French in the book titled *Amour bilingue*, and “evokes a language of origin which has perhaps ‘lost’ him, but which he himself has not lost... As if he could guarantee its salvation, even from his own loss,” (MO 36) Derrida uses this example to call into play an alternative kind of salvation, which moves beyond what the dualism of first-order languages represents.

Derrida underlines a new space of writing and thinking, which provokes “the logosphere that had a tendency to pull... [Franco-Maghrebian writers] under the rule of signs or strata of expression and always led them to a black hole: the loss of identity, the search for authenticity, and other figures of colonial entrapment” (Bensmaïa 102). To reject the language of the master on the grounds that it belongs to the master alone would be to internalize the master’s “speech act” (MO 24). To counter the purity of monolingualism imposed by the colonizer with the purity of monolingualism sought by the colonized perpetuates the ownership of language on both sides. Derrida deals with this problem through a different strategy.

The salvation Derrida has in mind can be understood in relation to his own exemplary position: a Jew of Algeria whose maternal language is already the language of the other, of the non-Jewish French colonist. Derrida’s experience, which differs from Khatibi’s, brings the reader to an understanding of what he previously called the more legibly political terror inside language.

In addition to the typological/taxonomical alienation experienced by bilinguals like Khatibi, there exists an originary alienation, which “institutes every language as the language of the other: the impossible property of a language” (*MO* 63). In addition to Khatibi’s case, Derrida’s situation shows “the colonial structure of any culture in an exemplary way,” (*MO* 39) by signalling an inherent, constitutive lack. Derrida points to the supplemental nature of all culture/language, by underlining the lack of an essential and originary culture/language of which we can claim ownership. In this way, he calls attention to the fissures in the speech act of the master, by showing that the master is not the master. Derrida challenges the dualism of first-order languages, and reminds us that beyond the oppositional and dualistic categories made available by the “master,” there is indeed a wide range of options to choose from in dealing with the question of linguistic and cultural identity.

To comprehend how complex the question of an originary language/culture becomes, we can also take a look at the national history of Algeria in addition to the personal history of Derrida. Over the past few centuries, there has been a great deal of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic contamination in Algeria. For example, centuries before the French landed there, Algeria was under Roman and Ottoman rule and influence. As Kaye notes,

[b]efore the Arab conquest in the seventh century and the Islamization of the Berbers, Algeria was a Roman province. And before it was annexed by the French in the nineteenth century, the Turks, who subjugated the Berbers and the Arabs in the sixteenth century, turned Algeria into a pirate state open to a multiplicity of cultural models during two centuries of Ottoman presence. The result is that Algeria’s cultural reality is a mosaic. (69)

This brief journey down history lane accentuates the difficulty of determining the roots of a culture and its originary language. Like many other nations, Algeria has been equally influenced, throughout its history, by Latin, classical Arabic, and French culture and language. Then how far back do we go in the past to mark the beginning of the beginning, or to restore that mythical purity of origin untouched by the master?

For Derrida, “all culture is originally colonial,” (*MO* 39) because culture equals acculturation, and to that extent, it has both pure and impure tendencies. When Derrida makes this statement, he emphasizes *all* culture in its various disguises. Whether our language arrives “repressively” (*MO* 40) from the colonizer’s military expeditions and genocides, or “irrepressibly” (*MO* 40) from “philanthropic... [and] humanitarian good works,” (*MO* 40) the “homo-hegemony remains at work in the culture” (*MO* 40). All culture is colonial in its structure to the extent that it comes from the other. Accordingly, all language, hence the only language we speak, is the language of the other. “We do not *own* it... since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for *the other*, from the other, kept by the other” (*MO* 40). It would thus be an easy way out to say that a desire for the purity of monolingualism comes only from the French colonizer. But this would be too simplistic.

Monolingualistic purity is, no doubt, in part contracted at school, as part of the Frenchifying education. As Derrida writes, “French literature [taught at school]... was the experience of a world without any tangible continuity with the one in which we lived, with almost nothing in common with our natural or social landscapes” (*MO* 45). One could only enter French literature, “its history, its works, its models... its modes of transmission and celebration,” (*MO* 45) “by losing one’s accent” (*MO* 45). Hence Derrida had to lose some of his southern accent to be able to enter French literature at a French school, and to a certain extent suspended his ties with the world in which he lived to enter the world of literary culture. However, he emphasizes that the purity imposed by the colonizer, through the French education, is far from explaining everything.

Derrida states that a desire for monolingualistic purity “begins before beginning,” (*MO* 48) and comes from the self as much as from the other. For example, Derrida confesses his own compulsive desire for purity and admits that earlier in his youth he believed that a strong southern accent seemed incompatible to him with the intellectual dignity of public speech. Even as French

literature was part of the colonial education received in French schools in Algeria, it was one thing he enjoyed receiving. Derrida recalls entering French literature with a “hyperbolic taste for the purity of language,” (MO 48) like a “hero-martyr-pioneer-outlaw-legislator” (MO 47) who “burn[s] everything in order to surrender himself to language,” (MO 47) as if “a last will of the language” (MO 47) is passed on to him, or as if language “would entrust itself only to [him]” (MO 47). The kind of purity he suggests in this context is not the result of an ethical or political concern, and has little to do with linguistic purisms defended by nationalist, patriotic speakers. It is not related to the “imperative and categorical... (the lexicon, grammar, stylistic or poetic decorum)” (MO 47) either. Derrida admits to an “impure ‘purity’,” (MO 47) whereby he surrenders to the one language that he can never appropriate. Hence, the double bind of impure purity, which is to be distinguished from the “purism” (MO 47) of the French colonizer.

Derrida’s purity is impure, because it gives rise only “to jealousy without appropriation” (MO 24). The jealousy toward possessing a pure French language makes Derrida inscribe ink scars on his body as well as the body of his work. He gets “caught ‘red-handed’ in the act” (MO 46). This jealousy, however, does not result in ownership. Derrida offers himself as an example to bear witness to the idea that “on the part of the one who speaks, monolingual solipsism does not imply colonialism, possession, property” (MO 22). His *nostalgeria* does not take him “home,” but to a state of being at home in exile as he “fails, lastingly [*à demeure*], to reach home” (MO 69). As he notes, “each time I open my mouth, each time I speak or write, I *promise*” (MO 67) like a martyr whose promise may be the salvation of monolingual purity. Yet despite the fact that Derrida resembles a messiah, and the originary promise “*resembles messianism*,” (MO 68) the promise or the salvation in question does not imply a restoration of purity. Derrida distinguishes the originary promise from will and intention. When he promises, he does not know what is being promised or to whom he extends the promise. The promise does not follow a

circular route to arrive at a teleological fulfillment of the will; rather, it conditions an opening toward the future. It is not possible to speak outside this promise of language to which Derrida surrenders himself.

While he reflects on his desire for purity in language in detail, Derrida also mentions his desire for purity in religion, but only in passing. First, Derrida observes that all language is the language of the other, and then remarks that we seek monolingual purity despite the endless acculturation of the language of the other. Like the child playing *fort/da*, he dwells on this double bind of language. Following these reflections on language and ownership, Derrida briefly dwells on his position as a martyr in relation to the double bind of religion. He notes how, as he was growing up, there was both a growing Jewish solidarity in Algeria, and an increasing sense of assimilation to the French Christian community.

The feverish bid for a “Frenchifying” which was also an embourgeoisification—were so frantic and so careless that the inspiration of Jewish culture seemed to succumb to an *asphyxia*: a state of apparent death... But that was only one of two alternating symptoms of the same affection, for the next moment the pulse seemed to quicken, as if the same “community” had been drugged, intoxicated, inebriated by new richness. (MO 53)

As Derrida states, a certain “Christian contamination” (MO 54) was beginning to spread as “churches were being mimicked, the rabbi would wear a black cassock... [and] circumcision was named ‘baptism’” (MO 54). The Jewish community both adopted these French-Christian practises, and failed indeterminately to identify itself with the French, the Christian, or the metropolitan, in short “‘the Catholics’,” (MO 52) which was used in reference to all non-Jewish French people.

What is ironic is that despite feeling estranged from the Jewish community in his youth, Derrida admits that he carries “the negative heritage” (MO 53) of this simultaneous amnesia and hypermnnesia. Although he contends, throughout *Monolingualism*, that every language, religion, culture is colonial to a certain extent, he cannot but admit to a desire for purity of the Jewish

legacy. The tension between Derrida's sense of belonging and non-belonging to the Jewish community is also embedded in the way this community relates to itself. Just as Derrida both refers to himself as an Algerian Jew and fails to identify himself with the Jewish community, the Jews in Algeria refer to themselves as a community, but fail to identify themselves with any tradition, including their own. On the one hand, the Jewish community carries the scars of its own history and customs—symbolized by the cut of circumcision, the distinguishing mark of membership in Judaism inscribed on the body of the martyr; on the other hand, the same community carries the traces of an “accultured” (MO 53) French Christian communion, which alienates them from their origins.

This double bind of religion, along with the double bind of language, shows that Derrida's own sense of identity is marked by a profound irony. He occupies an ambiguous position, and utilizes his own position to underline various ambiguities and fissures within the seemingly stable structures of autobiography, language and religion. He feels alienated from his primary language French, but feels a neurotic attachment to it; as he says, he has the loving appropriation of the only language forbidden to him. Similarly, he does not identify with the Jewish community more than he does with Catholics or Muslims, but carries the scars and the “handicapped memory” (MO 54) of the Jewish tradition into which he was born.

Derrida's position shows us the double bind we encounter in various paradigms from autobiography to language to religion. *Monolingualism* calls into question the borders between purity/impurity, colonized/colonizer, appropriation/expropriation, center/periphery in different contexts, by focusing on the tensions and the “obscure common power” (MO 40) that keeps these myriad couplings entangled. Similar to Özdamar's narrators, who cross boundaries between East/West, modernity/tradition to find that these pairs are not exactly divisible by two, Derrida

throws light on the tensions, which make it difficult to rigorously distinguish between internal and structural features of these enmeshed pairs.

At the end of his autobiographical exercise, when he asks “what is identity, this concept of which the transparent identity to itself is always dogmatically presupposed,” (*MO* 14) Derrida calls attention to the double bind of autobiography rather than providing the reader with a self-enclosed model of identification. Like Özdamar, he does not fulfill the role of the typical autobiographer, who restores his “authentic” self/voice at the end of the writing process. Instead of taking sides with the colonized or the colonizer, he shows that he displays both these tendencies. He is both the host and the hostage. Derrida defines identity as that space of relation, where hospitality and hostility are entangled in one another: “I am referring to the semantic chain that works on the body of hospitality as well as hostility [again, the double bind]—*hostis, hospes, hosti-pet, posis, despotes, potere...*” (*MO* 14).

A recognition of this entanglement has the effect of “blur[ing] the boundaries [between oppositional notions], cross[ing] them, and mak[ing] their historical artifice appear, also their violence, meaning the relations of force that are concentrated there and actually capitalize themselves there interminably” (*MO* 9). If in every culture that institutes power, “mastery begins, as we know, through the power of naming, of imposing and legitimating appellations,” (*MO* 39) then Derrida warns the reader not to lose sight of the inner fissures of the power that comes from naming. That’s why he writes his testimony in French, the language of “the master, the *hospes*, the colonist,” (*MO* 23) to prove that it is not the language of the colonizer:

Small wonder, then, that you wished to free-up the monolingualism of its pellucid prose, to locate some of the heterogeneity of the alterity that remains both yours and alien to you, “to make something happen to this language” [*MO* 51]. The language of the master, the colonist, was also yours, yours to dispossess him of, to expropriate from him inappropriately. (Young 423)

As Young observes, Derrida writes from within the system he dismantles to resist the master-slave dichotomy. He uses the language of the so-called master to elaborate on the very limitations of mastering language. Derrida thus underlines the dual function of language. On the one hand, it perpetuates a sense of belonging, as Benedict Anderson states, by virtue of having the “capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities” (Kaye 122). On the other hand, it is a dynamic and ever-changing process of meaning-making, which escapes all essentialist notions of identity. Language transcends national frontiers and becomes the inalienable property of whoever appropriates them.²⁸

At this point, I would like to remind the reader of Özdamar’s story “Grandfather Tongue,” where the narrator’s first reaction to recovering her heritage was to shut herself in a room for forty days to learn Arabic, avoiding any contact with German, the language of the “Western other.” Her search for authenticity, however, reveals itself to be yet another form of entrapment as she tries to externalize German language and culture in an attempt to fully internalize Arabic language and heritage. At the end of the story, the narrator embodies all the languages and cultures that constitute her identity, whose social and historical coordinates remain in flux. If we think of Derrida’s argument in *Monolingualism* in a parallel line with the commentary about language and identity in Özdamar’s story, we can conclude that both texts treat the absence of a stable model of identification as an advantage, because it

permits one at once to analyze the historical phenomena of appropriation and to treat them *politically* by avoiding, above all, the reconstitution of what these phantasms managed to motivate: “nationalist” aggressions (which are always more or less “naturalist”) or monoculturalist homo-hegemony. (MO 64)

²⁸ This is also evident in the way “the coercive Frenchification and evangelization of Algerian culture was metamorphosed into a positive force when... the nationalists of the 1950s, who themselves went through the French educational system, used French as a privileged weapon against the colonial order” (Kaye 69).

Here Derrida specifically brings up the necessity for both mourning the past and avoiding the aggressions that the phantasms of the past may provoke. Like Özdamar, Derrida develops a double critical consciousness, and uses language to remain critical of both Algerian nationalism and Western/French hegemony. In the light of this double critique, the difficult question that awaits the Franco-Maghrebian *par excellence* is the following: if there is no pure idiom to capture a transparent and proper identity, does the “disorder of identity favour or inhibit anamnesia? Does it heighten the desire for memory, or does it drive the genealogical fantasy to despair? Does it suppress, repress, or liberate?” (MO 17-18).

As Derrida writes, “the absence of a stable model of identification for an *ego*—in all its dimensions: linguistic, cultural, and so on—gives rise to impulses that are always *on the brink* of collapse, and oscillate, as a result, between three threatening possibilities” (MO 60). The first possibility is amnesia without recourse: the growing disintegration, and the condition of feeling melancholic for the lack of something one cannot recall. Alienated and dissimulated in language, one misses the very origin that does not exist. The second possibility is amnesia under an integrative guise. This type of amnesia, as Derrida asserts, “represents the stereotypes that homogenize and conform to the model of average or dominant French person,” (MO 60) who substitutes melancholy with fetishism. S/he tries to focus on material consumption in order to repress the melancholy. The third possibility is hypermnesia, an abnormally vivid memory: “one’s commitment to traces—traces of writing, language, experience—which carry anamnesis beyond the mere reconstruction of a given heritage, beyond an available past” (MO 60).

Autobiographical desire privileges neither of these options; it underlines the oscillation between amnesia, hegemonic structure of the present over the past, and hypermnesia, hegemonic structure of the past over the present and future. On the one hand, the desire for the archival resists total oblivion. On the other hand, the act of remembrance is closely related to the desire to

invent a “*prior-to-the-first* language destined to translate... the truth of what never took place by avowing it,” (MO 61) thus emphasizing the absence of “origin,” replaced by the prosthesis of origin, and the failure of absolute remembrance.

Oscillating between amnesia and hypermnnesia, between the risk of being drawn into nostalgia and the risk of taking on an uncritical acceptance of history, Derrida destabilizes “our traditional understanding of identity, history, and memory [which] always assumes the form of a circle” (Dooley 6). He specifically uses the word “mourning” instead of “remembering,” because “if memory testifies to the fact that we can never fully recollect the past, then mourning affirms that we are never finished with the past: that the task of comprehending the past always lies ahead of us” (Dooley 8). In this respect, autobiographical *récit* is not so much about the recollection of the essence of the writing subject, but about the “secrets of unreadability,” (MO 73) which is why at the end of another autobiographical exercise, in “Circumfession,” Derrida confesses: “you have become ‘less than yourself’” (314). Derrida’s autobiographical practice is a recollection forward, towards the future where he “never knows in the present, with present knowledge” (Ear 9). As he admits at the end of his account in *Monolingualism*, “a Judeo-Franco-Maghrebian genealogy does not clarify everything, far from it. But could I explain anything without it ever?” (MO 71-72).

Despite the fact that memory fails to recover what is lost, we do not give up the desire to mourn the fractured past by transforming and re-inventing it to make sense of the present/future. In contradistinction to the totalizing logic, whereby memory always works toward the recollection of an originary presence, and negates that which resists the totalizing grasp of the universal, Derrida recognizes the significance of the ashes and the interminable power with which they enable us to reweave history and re-visit our identification models. He refers to the “transvoided memory” as “a strangely bottomless alienation of the soul: a catastrophe... [and] a

paradoxical opportunity” (*MO* 53). Like the obstacle, transvoided memory is both an opportunity and a catastrophe, because it makes us realize that without a risk of failure of memory, there can be no history.

The autobiographical practice thus “involves another thought of avowal or confession of the ‘truth-making’,” (*MO* 60) whereby “truth remains bound to its spectral relationship with the lie” (Kronick 1002). For example, Derrida takes the risk of displaying a performative contradiction and speaks of his *nostalgeria* in French, because without this spectral doubling there can be no personal history. Even as the encyclopaedic temptation to archive defies archiving, we continue to deform and reform our testimonies, by accommodating “the impure history of ghosts” (*Specters* 175) by offering them a hospitable memory. The ghosts demand a “historical opening to the future” (*Specters* 167) and resist totalizing logic. If memory is selective and fragmentary, then the ways in which we archive the past determine our commitment to doing justice to the other. In this respect, the simultaneous desire and failure conditioned by autobiography is intimately linked with an ethical and political concern for justice. Derrida’s desire to keep alive “a trace of all the voices... traversing [him]” (“Strange” 34) manifests an autobiographical resistance to solipsist formations of identity attained through excessive forgetting or remembering.

Because of the essential drift [*dérive*] in memory, autobiography has nothing to do with subjective self-revelation or “lifting a veil so as to present something to be seen in neutral, cognitive, or theoretical fashion” (“Typewriter” 109). The confessional thread in Derrida’s work provides us with a lens through which to perceive autobiography as a dialogic testimony that calls forth the author’s incomparable responsibility to respond to the other:

My law, the one to which I try to devote myself or respond, is *the text of the other*, its very singularity, its idiom, its appeal which precedes me. But I can only respond to it in a responsible way (and this goes for the law in general, ethics in particular) if I put in play,

and in guarantee (*en gage*) my singularity, by signing, with another signature; for the countersignature signs by confirming the signature of the other, but also by signing in an absolutely new and inaugural way, both at once. (“Strange Institution” 66-67)

The response of which Derrida speaks here requires both an affirmation of the singularity of the self, and an unconditional acceptance of the inexhaustible alterity of the other, even though the self cannot have proper experience of the other’s ego. In this respect, the response demands more faith than knowledge; it amounts to more of a testimony than a demonstration.

Derrida’s understanding of autobiography has “the effect of a secret contract, a credit account which has been both opened and encrypted, an indebtedness, an alliance or annulus” (*Ear* 9). The division of the *autos* “doesn’t mean that one has to dissolve the value of the autobiographical *récit*” (*Ear* 45). Even as the dream of unity remains only a promise, this promise itself is “what sets desire in motion” (*Points* 136). Derrida reminds us that as long as there is the promise and the desire, we continue to take the risk of re-inventing our identity without an assured model. The structural opening enabled by a “desire without a horizon” (*MO* 68) *is* hospitality. It is this hospitality that Derrida emphasizes in his essay titled “Otobiographies” as he shifts the focus from “auto” to “oto” (“oto” comes from the Greek word “otolith,” which means “ear”) and remarks that “it is the ear of the other that signs. The ear of the other says me to me and constitutes the *autos* of my autobiography” (*Ear* 50-51). The other disturbs the authority of the author, whose signature becomes effective “not at the moment it apparently takes place, but only later, when ears will have managed to receive the message... the signature will take place on the addressee’s side...” (*Ear* 51). Whether the receiving ear is the ear of the other or the ear of the autobiographical “subject [who] seals—or, in phenomenological terms, affects—itself in the completion of a circuit between voice and hearing, mouth and ear” (Smith 76), the alterity gives rise to a “testamentary structure [which] doesn’t befall a text as if by accident, but constructs it” (*Ear* 51). Hence we have an autobiographical account—where we

conventionally encounter the strongest claim to a solipsist ego—that is more of a relation to the other than to a self-same ego model.

Derrida's view changes the way we understand identity, this general concept whereby the transparency of the self to the self is presupposed. Rather than conceiving of identity as a self-same relation, or as submission to difference, Derrida proposes to think of it as a "folding which imprints itself upon the enigmatic articulation between a universal structure and its idiomatic testimony" (MO 59). The process of identification can be seen as "a wave [*déferlement*]," (MO 32) which moves between contradictory imperatives such as sameness and difference, yielding to neither but mapping out the resemblances in difference.

Autobiography, in this respect, implies a simultaneous move toward the singular and the universal. As Derrida uses the singular situation of Khatibi, a bilingual who remarks being caught in the chiasmus between his mother tongue and acquired tongue, to make a point about alienation in language in general, Khatibi's "exceptional situation... [becomes] at the same time, certainly exemplary of a universal structure" (MO 63). Similarly, Derrida uses his own particular situation to set an example to the Franco-Maghrebian *par excellence*, although he recognizes, from the beginning of *Monolingualism*, that such exemplarity remains problematic. It is not possible for the self to set an example to the stable categories of the universal when the self constantly changes in relation to the other, never recuperating a self-same ego model. Each time the "I" writes, s/he makes a *promise*, which "gathers language... not in its identity or its unity... but in the uniqueness or singularity of a gathering together of its difference to itself" (MO 67-8). Because of this gathering of difference, it is not possible for the self to set an example to the unchanging universal truth. Yet, despite this impossibility conditioned by the absence of a transparent self, we continue to take the singular, contextualize it, and use it as an example in order to make history, because without this paradox, there can be no history. What Derrida

reminds us is that between the ever-shifting context of the singular and the fixed structure of the universal, the histories we construct remain incomplete and fragmented, hence leaving room for de-structuring, transforming, and re-inventing selfhood.

In the ironic gap opened between the singular and the universal, autobiography gives rise to hospitality. When Derrida speaks of hospitality in relation to testimony, he underlines the relation between self and other that is always already there, a prior to any ethical decision. In other words, when Derrida uses the word hospitality, he does not refer to a demand for tolerance or moral judgment, which could amount to yet another “colonial impulse” (*MO* 40) among others. For him, expressions such as “openness to the other” are “worn enough to give up the ghost” (*MO* 40). Hospitality, in his view, is the entanglement of the inside and the outside, the foreign and the native; it is the trace of the other left by the self, who, in every act of auto-affection, gathers momentum from its resistance.

Derrida’s wave analogy calls attention to the double bind of autobiography, and helps us understand the ongoing interaction between different communities in terms of their simultaneous resistance and convergence. “*Déferlement*” (*MO* 32) connotes both “surging,” an ongoing interaction that sustains its momentum, and “deferral,” a delay of the reconciliation of difference through synthesis. The wave-like movement conditioned by the double bind, which forms the basis of Derrida’s argument, proves relevant in emphasizing some of the points made by the two other writers studied in this project. Pamuk, Özdamar, and Derrida use different means of articulating similar concerns. Whereas Derrida utilizes aspects of his biography and Franco-Algerian history to stress the double bind of autobiography, language, and religion, Pamuk draws on Turkey’s self-colonialism in relation to the “West” by drawing on double-edged, Janus-faced characters who cannot resolve the tensions they embody. Similarly, Özdamar develops a double

critical consciousness to denaturalize the concept of mother tongue, and to reveal the assumptions about the formation of belonging from a transnational perspective.

Although the three writers use different metaphors and conceptual models, they share a common concern with breaking the rigidity of the hegemonic structure of historical narratives. They take advantage of language and its irreducible metaphoric possibilities to suggest that language overwhelms and disrupts the unity of the monologic narratives of the past. They invite a non-hierarchical space of relation between self and other, center and margin. Whereas Pamuk and Özdamar displace master narratives through the acts of literature, which provide alternative ways of interpreting the history, Derrida both constructs a literary-autobiographical narrative, and uses philosophical reflection to question the role of language in constructing narratives that destabilize the center. If mastery begins, as Derrida says, through the power of naming and legitimating appellations, then the tensions he reveals to be inherent to the process of identification weave a network of filiations between self and other, by keeping them doubly bound and “regenerating them toward a future still without a name” (*MO* 93).

Derrida’s theoretical reflections in *Monolingualism* lend strong critical framework to the entire project. Like Pamuk and Özdamar, Derrida is not interested in denying the hegemonic force of the many existing center/s; rather he remarks that “the center is not the center” (“Structure” 279). What this double interdiction implies is that there is no transcendent center of origin; only infinite substitutions of the center exist, hence further signification and transformation of a structure’s contents are possible through language. Moreover, Derrida suggests that there is no responsibility without the destabilizing experience of aporia. The double gesture of aporia challenges the foundations of universal narratives, by throwing light on conflicting demands and undecideable borders, and by generating new modes of interaction among entangled subjectivities.

5 ENTANGLED TAXONOMIES: RESEMBLANCE IN DIFFERENCE

So far, my reading of *Monolingualism* has concentrated on Derrida's critique of the center-periphery model, especially as this model manifests itself on a linguistic level. The political act of naming, and by extension, imposing mutually exclusive taxonomies, such as the colonized vs. the colonizer, resembles the appropriation of the bridge metaphor in speaking about East and West. The construction of incommensurable paradigms—whether these paradigms refer to Turkey and Europe, Istanbul and Kars, Algiers and Paris, or Algeria and France—contribute to the dissemination of what Derrida terms “‘ideologies’, ‘fetishizations’, and symbolics of appropriation” (*MO* 64). Derrida throws critical light on the appropriation of the rigorous distinctions of Western modernity to find a way out of the hierarchical models of identity founded on oppositional classifications. But he does not attain his goal by rejecting the Western model he critiques. As he remarks in the final pages of *Monolingualism*, Derrida writes from within the “Graeco-Latino-Christiano-Gallic culture to which [his] monolingualism forever confines [him],” (71) but, at the same time, he points to the fissures of the seemingly intact discourses that different models assume.

In addition to exploring “the figure of the *Western* heading and of the *final* headland,” (*Other Heading* 25) “itself a model in crisis, which has not assumed its responsibilities,” (Chérif 83) Derrida also shows that there are at least two dominant models in Algeria that respond to the Western model. On the one hand, there are the Algerian nationalists who use the West as part of an ideological vocabulary to promote it as a positive developmental ideal, and are tempted “by the perpetuity of superficial democracy out of fear of instability or an insatiable appetite for power, and the ‘modernists’, who are cut off from the masses and subjected to the temptation of frantic Westernization” (Chérif 84). For example, when Derrida recalls his childhood and the widely accepted image of France among Algerians, he notes the following: “we used to say...

‘those people can afford vacations in France’... ‘this teacher is from France’; ‘this cheese is from France’” (MO 41). France was “a place of fantasy,” reflecting “the universal features of the good Republic” (MO 42). For many Algerians, as Derrida puts it, France was

the *metropole*, the Capital-City-Mother-Fatherland, the city of the mother tongue: that was a place which represented, without being it, a faraway country, near but far away, not alien, for that would be too simple, but strange, fantastic, phantomlike [*fantomal*]. Deep down, I wonder whether one of my first and most imposing figures of spectrality, of spectrality itself, was not France. (MO 42)

Derrida’s childhood impressions of France are not that far-removed from what Pamuk’s characters recall about Europe, particularly those raised in big cities like Istanbul under the direct influence of Western political, social, and education systems. Both in Algeria’s colonial years, and in the years leading to the foundation of the Turkish Republic, including the transition from the colonial Ottoman Empire to self-colonized Turkey, we find an increasing engagement with the West as a cultural model, more particularly with the history of France as “a fable and bible” (MO 44).

We can locate particular moments in history when Algeria, through the imposition of colonial power and direct subjugation to the West, and Turkey, through a self-colonial dynamism in relation to the West, have defined themselves in response to the French/European spectral other as “a model of good speech and good writing... good Republic” (MO 42). The symbol of the wealthy metropole, however, was neither consistent nor simply France or Europe in a broader sense. What the works of the three writers undertaken in this dissertation illustrate is that several political models have been created and articulated through a vocabulary that mobilizes the West to define relational hierarchies between different geographies. The imaginary boundaries separating East and West sometimes cut through the internal borders of Turkey, from Kars to Istanbul; other times these borders run through Istanbul to Berlin or Frankfurt, as we find in the works of Pamuk and Özdamar. Similarly in *Monolingualism* we come across both a division

between France and Algeria, and “the reconstitution of the spectral simulacrum of a capital/province structure (‘Algiers/the interior’, ‘Algiers/Oran’, residential districts generally on hilltops/poor districts often further below)” (*MO* 43).

By contrast to the Algerian nationalists who perceive the West as a positive developmental ideal, on the other hand, there are the anti-Westernist Algerian nationalists who respond to the image of the idealized West/France as a “mythical ‘Overthere’” (*MO* 42) through a self-assertive Algerian-Arabo-Islamic identity. In this respect, in both Algeria and Turkey, one can take note of the rise of at least two kinds of nationalisms: traditionalist and Islamist, and Western-oriented and secular. In fact, the problems of nationalism and its homogenous conjectures of identity are important issues raised by all three writers examined in this dissertation, who extend their efforts for providing alternative testimonies of the history archived in official resources in their respective geographies. Derrida’s account of the colonial relationship between France and Algeria offers parallel readings with Pamuk’s account of Turkey’s self-colonial position toward Western Europe. His depiction of the disintegrated community in Algeria cut off at once from Maghrebian, French-European, and Jewish cultures invites intriguing comparisons with Pamuk’s portrayal of the rupture experienced by the Turks during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. Just as Derrida gives his case as an example to illustrate that he participates in all these cultures without belonging to anyone of them, Pamuk reminds the reader of the polyglot and multi-cultural Ottoman legacy of present-day Turkish society with the purpose of both resisting oblivion, and of challenging the assets of nationalism in the modern secular Republic.

Although Algeria celebrated the removal of foreign forces from its land about four decades ago, similar to Turkey that celebrated its national independence nearly a century before—when it cleared the land of both Allied powers and long-lasting Arabic/Persian influence—a return

to the “proper identity” of Algeria and Turkey turned out to be more complicated than previously anticipated. As Pamuk shows us, in the case of Turkey, the populations that once lived side by side under the Ottoman Empire would soon turn against one another in the new nation, where, as we read in *Snow*, Islamists and ethnic minorities like the Kurds became the state’s dissidents. Özdamar comparably seeks a way of co-inhabiting both the pre-Republican culture, which has been buried in some ways under modern life, and secular post-Republican values. Pamuk and Özdamar do not desire to create a nostalgic affect on the reader, but instead challenge radical nationalist discourses, which enjoin us to destroy all ashes and specters of our past, by making us accept the modernity/tradition dichotomy and by asking us to choose one over the other. The shared goal of Pamuk and Özdamar is to dismantle this oppositional understanding of the modern and the traditional while calling into question the points of tension in between.

Like Pamuk, Özdamar refuses to choose from either pre-Republican (traditional) or Republican (modern) Turkish cultures, or from either Turkish (native) or Western/German (foreign) languages. Özdamar’s narrator in “Grandfather Tongue” realizes that she is not more indebted to the Arabic language of her grandfather or of Ibni Abdullah anymore than to the Turkish language of her Turkish mother and the German language of a neighbour in Berlin. As Özdamar critiques the association of certain languages with closed national identities, Derrida disturbs the linguistic and cultural bifurcation in the context of postcolonial Algeria, where French “belongs” to the master culture, and the subordinated culture can only recover an authentic, indigenous identity by reviving the language preceding French, the linguistic currency of the capitalist West. At the heart of these nationalist bifurcations lies a self-validating as well as self-victimizing discourse. For example, Blue’s circle tries to get back at the “West” for having been treated as poor, backward peoples blinded by religious faith in the absence of better, democratic living conditions. For Derrida, a similar enmity towards the West is prevalent among

Algerians who try to purify their culture from all foreign (French) influence in the pursuit of a nationalist identity politics. In order to expose this self-colonizing move, the three writers expose how much “the imagined Western gaze is an integral part of [...non-Western] identity” (Ahiska 365).

As I tried to show in the first chapter, Sunay and Blue, who imagine the ideals of their homeland in response to the imagined West a positive or negative model, equally damage the Turkish democracy by bringing an end to public discussion. Whether it appears as a positive or negative marker, the “West” entails a certain set of ideas, which are contrasted to what the East represents. The opposition that exists between Sunay and Blue in *Snow* is not so different from the antagonism between the colonizer/French master and the colonized/Algerian postcolonialist, who seeks to step entirely outside the master’s cultural capital. The opposition between modernity and tradition, frantic Westernization and cultural purism, lies at the heart of the many struggles and obscure powers depicted by Pamuk as well as Derrida.

The writers I have studied as part of this project call into play the East-West/center-periphery entanglement by moving beyond such oppositional divisions. They re-inscribe the fragmented representations of cultural memory from within and without the national boundaries to replace the homogenous conjectures and solipsist formations of identity in their respective geographies. They multiply the linguistic, ethnic, and religious references. While Pamuk and Özdamar work through fictional characters and settings, Derrida’s critique of nationalist, linguistic, and ethnic fraternities begins with a testimony, which attests to the absence of a stable model of identification.

Derrida begins by posing a personal question as he reflects on the education he received in a French boarding school in Algeria and alludes to a community who once had lost and regained their citizenship:

I'm not one of the family means... more figuratively, that I am not part of any group, that I do not identify myself with a linguistic community, a national community, a political party, or with any group or clique whatsoever... I am a Jew from Algeria, from a certain type of community, in which belonging to Judaism was problematic, belonging to Algeria was problematic, belonging to France was problematic, etc. (*Taste* 27)

Derrida uses his own ambiguous position as a Sephardic-Judeo-French-Algerian to raise questions about patriotisms and fraternities in both France and Algeria. In a way, he refers to his past to affirm that one would not “contrast the East and the West, especially when talking about Algeria. First, the Arab and Muslim or Arabo-Muslim culture of Algeria and of Maghreb is also a Western culture. There are many Islams, there are many Wests” (Chérif 39). That there are many Easts and Wests, many centers and margins, which escape monopolizing definitions, is visible in the several hyphens that Derrida as well as the characters in Pamuk's and Özdamar's books embody.

In addition to a Sephardic-Judeo-French-Algerian writer who testifies to his own sense of non-belonging to a particular group, we encounter a Turkish-German woman in Özdamar's story who regularly crosses from East to West Germany and slides through different roles, from shutting herself in the apartment of the Arabic master/lover to throwing “the text” of the master onto the Autobahn, and a godless-secular-Westernist-Turk (in *Snow*) who, after having spent several years in Frankfurt, is thinking twice about faith and the Muslim religion when he lives in Kars in *Snow*. Often the hyphens gather together conflicting roles, and give rise to complex layers of identity. Whereas Pamuk creates double-edged characters, Özdamar develops a double critical consciousness, and Derrida introduces the notion of the double bind to accentuate the multi-referential aspects of living in a multi-cultural society at the turn of the century.

As he remarks in an interview with Chérif, Derrida uses his own singular testimony to underline the complicated taxonomical quest:

It so happens that my family was in Algeria before the colonization, and it probably came from the Spain where Greek, Arab, and Jewish thinking all intimately blended together. And I believe that one of our primary intellectual responsibilities today is to rediscover the sources and the moments in which those currents, far from being in contrast, truly fertilized each other. (39)

The cross-fertilization of which Derrida speaks may hold true for many cultures, but it is particularly relevant for Turkish and Maghrebian cultures, which are situated at the Mediterranean cross-roads, and share the polyglot and multi-religious heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Whereas Algeria is the symbolic gateway between Europe and the Greater Middle East, Turkey is representative of a major point of contact between Europe and the Middle East. The political, social, religious, and ethnic landscape of Turkey and Algeria are remarkably different. Yet in an attempt to provide a productive alternative to the European/French model, they both offer poignant examples of the difficult yet exciting position that these nations hold on the margins of Europe.

Pamuk, Derrida and Özdamar examine the “entangled taxonomy” (*MO* 79) of the communities that necessarily involve one another. They are writers of the future, who understand historical, linguistic, and cultural legacies of various cultures and nations in terms of their resemblance in difference. Whether it represents the voice of the secular Turkish groups, the Turkish-German diaspora, or the Franco-Maghrebian Jews, the autobiographical “I” in their works leads the self toward an other; what the “I” symbolizes is “only the misdirection,” (“Circumfession” 188) the non-coincidence with oneself. Only through the catastrophe and the paradoxical opportunity of the misdirection does the self find a means of translating itself to itself. Derrida’s testimony throws light on this double bind called into play by the autobiographical desire in every act of writing, which serves as “some powerful utterance-producing machine that programs the movements of the two opposing forces at once” (*Ear* 29). By that account, underneath counteractive dynamisms and contesting opinions lie entanglements,

which variably loosen and thicken. To confront the colonizer implies a confrontation with the colonizer within the colonized, to understand the “return” of Islam one must trace the history of secularism and the role of military, and finally, to better understand the space occupied by the transnational actors, one needs to comprehend their dual role, their simultaneous participation in and betrayal of the culture of the homeland and the hostland.

My goal here is not to assert that Algeria and Turkey, or France and Germany, are one and the same since these nations share different histories, and national and religious concerns. Moreover, what interests me is not only a study of the center/margin relations, but also of the relation between the different margins. Attention to the similarities between the cultural heritages of Algeria and Turkey could prove useful in proposing a model of entanglement, which provides us with a more malleable way of thinking about the relations between what we so easily refer to as East and West. As Woodhull remarks, “in the age of transnationalism, it seems more fruitful to shift our sights and to look at both minoritarian writing’s relations to an array of ‘metropolitan’ locations and its relations to other minoritarian spheres, that is, relations of margin to margin” (*Transfigurations* 218). Throughout the dissertation, I drew on different pairs for comparison to see how margins relate to other margins, as well as to the centers, across a variety of geopolitical locations: Kars to Istanbul, Istanbul to Frankfurt, Oran to Algiers, Algiers to Paris, Turkey to France/Germany, Algeria to France, Turkey to Algeria, and so forth.

Turkey and Algeria are unique sites for promoting cosmopolitan forms of hospitality, which can accommodate an array of languages, cultures and histories. Pamuk often makes references to this mosaic by calling attention to the historical buildings and architecture in the old cities of Turkey to highlight the richness of the cultures that have inhabited these spaces over centuries. For example, the description of the theatre in *Snow* on the night of the shooting comprises a brief remembrance for several people who occupied the theatre from late 1800s to

1990s. Different time periods overlap in this description as the theatre salon turns into a palimpsest that bears witness to both the ghosts/spectres and the living.

Of the five shots in the first volley, one hit the plaster laurel leaf above the box where, a quarter century earlier, the last Soviet consul in Kars had watched films in the company of his dog. This bullet went wide because the soldier who had fired the shot—a Kurd from Siirt—had no wish to kill anyone... Another bullet flew over the nest where the TV camera was perched to hit the wooden balustrade that marked off the standing room from which poor romantic Armenian girls who could afford only the cheapest tickets had once watched theatre troupes. (*Snow* 168)

If remembrance and archive are forms of resistance to oblivion and violence, Pamuk's attempt to excavate this enmeshed history through architectural metaphors is an affirmation of the survival of the traces left by Turks, Armenians, Kurds, Azeris, and several other ethnic and religious communities, who could find a means of co-existing under the Ottoman Empire.

As Khatibi notes in *Maghreb Pluriel*, Maghreb has a similar geographical and historical role to Turkey.

[Khatibi] reconceptualizes North African culture in terms of its relation to the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds at large, a relation manifested, for example, not only in the many languages that circulate in the Maghreb (Berber, Arabic, French, Italian, etc.) but in the traces left by one language in another and in the complex weave of imperial, cultural and religious histories that has shaped the region from ancient times to the present day. Conquests by Romans, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, French and Italians... (Woodhull, *Transfigurations* 213)

These cross-fertilizations are important to remember as we increasingly witness both the rise of nationalist aggressions and multicultural living at the turn of the century, particularly within and at the borders of Europe.

My choice of Pamuk, Özdamar, and Derrida also takes as a basis the discovery that all three writers work through a grafted genre that accommodates future formulations of the identities in transition. Thinking of life as “perhaps a mere prejudice... a prejudgment, a sentence,

a hasty arrest, a risky prediction,”²⁹ (*Ear* 9) they suspend preconceived notions. They work toward a future without an “eschatological *content*” (*MO* 68). In other words, the future here should not be understood “as an ideal goal; a distant sense of perfection to which we can all aspire. The point of emphasizing the future... is that it should always disturb and threaten us in the present,” (Dooley 145) by casting a skeptical eye on the dream of unity, and exporting us in advance toward the “elsewhere” (*MO* 71) of the civilization, the nation, the language we inhabit.

Derrida, like Pamuk and Özdamar, writes in a hybrid genre that accommodates different voices and testimonies. The three eclectic writers studied in this dissertation do not only call into question the desire for cultural, national, and linguistic purism, but also the desire for generic purism. They are confident crossing borders not only between self and other—geographically, culturally, and linguistically speaking—but also between different genres. The genre-trespassing in their works represents the trespassing of other classifications as well for the question of literary genre also raises the question of “gender, genus, and taxonomy more generally—[and] brings with it the question of law... an enforceable principle of non-contamination and non-contradiction” (“Law of Genre” 221). Because the question of literary genre “covers the motif of the law in general,” (“Law of Genre” 243) their writing practices simultaneously problematize the limitations of literary genres, and the generic quality of presumably stable ethnic, religious and national identities.

As they cross borders on the levels of both content and form, the taxonomic certainties of the “I” are suspended in “a *récit* where I/we are, where I summon us [*ou je/nous somme*]” (“Law of Genre” 252). The ambiguity of the generic quality of their writing reflects the ironic ways in which they deal with the question of identity. As they graft different genres, hence create

²⁹ Derrida’s words resonate Nietzsche’s statement in the preface to his autobiography: “I live on my own credit: it is perhaps a mere prejudice that I live” (*Ecce* 217). The autobiographer testifies to his testimony, telling his life to himself—the sole witness of his “truth.”

different means of accommodating the voices they embody, simultaneous histories co-originate and co-develop historically through the ceaseless undulatory contacts depicted in their works. The contingent quality of their writing helps to sustain, rather than to underwrite or dissolve, malleable formations of selfhood.

In the changing political world order, where different subjectivities and ideologies are increasingly interlacing, they suggest a dynamic reading of the different collectivities within and at the borders of Europe. They explore the plurality of languages and cultures that have historically progressed along partly similar and partly divergent agglomerative lineages resulting in an inevitable diversity. Crossing geographical, cultural, linguistic, and temporal borders, they also remind us of our responsibility to re-construct ourselves without conforming to either the Western/Eurocentric or the anti-Western/anti-Eurocentric models, but by developing a sensitized understanding of the entanglements of the many Easts and the many Wests, with their potential for creating new patterns of identity.

The metaphor of entanglement, which I found useful in analyzing the resemblances in difference both within the communities represented in each text and among the three texts, has brought this project so far. There are, unquestionably, more spectres to let loose (*MO 73*), as Derrida would say. Once I began to concentrate on the different texts written across a wide spectrum of cultural and historical backgrounds, I became increasingly aware of the many directions that this project could take through future research.

For example, Derrida's focus in *Monolingualism* is on linguistic and cultural identity, and, in this respect, it shares similarities with Özdamar's concern for linguistic and transnational identity. However, *Monolingualism* does not so much focus on the migration from the Maghreb to France as on the ideal of France being imported to the Maghreb during colonization and thereafter. However, it would be fascinating to embark upon a project that focuses on the relation

between language, migration, and trans/national identity in both Derrida and Özdamar. Today Turks in Germany and Algerians in France constitute a major portion of the minority population, and both the positive and negative entanglements of these different nationalities raise intriguing questions about the relevance and limitations of national narratives, as well as the meaning of hospitality in a global context.

Derrida notes elsewhere that France has the “tendency [since the revolution] to portray itself as being more open to political refugees in contradistinction to other European countries” (*Cosmopolitanism* 10). Yet, as he further points out, “the motives behind such a policy of opening up to the foreigner have, however, never been ‘ethical’ *stricto sensu*—in the sense of the moral law or the law of the land (*sèjour*)—(*ethos*), or, indeed, the law of hospitality” (*Cosmopolitanism* 10). According to Derrida, the kind of hospitality shown by the French government toward the Maghrebians is one that is understood in terms of an economy of exchange. The host remains master of his domain and welcomes the other only on certain conditions:

“Welcome to my home... please remove your shoes and do not touch the furniture.” In turn the guest respects and returns in kind these conditional expectations... This is a circular economy of exchange that organizes itself around the mastery of the host... Similar conditions determine the hospitality of the city and the nation-state: “Welcome to our country... provided you fulfill certain immigration requirements, restrictions.” (Dooley 110)

The kind of hospitality suggested here, organized around the economy of exchange, echoes the conditional acceptance of the Turkish guest workers in Germany, whose residential rights are determined by the simultaneously exclusive and inclusive “rotation” and “integration” policies introduced by the German government. The conditional hospitality, which assigns an immutable space to the Turkish and Algerian immigrants in Germany and France is a reciprocity that needs to be developed in a future project, perhaps through a comparative study of Francophone

Maghrebian and Germanophone Turkish writers, who (whether as a result of colonial experience or migration) experiment in a language that is not their own to convey the complexity of shifting geopolitical identities, and re-evaluate the meaning of the concept of Europe.

Another important question that surfaces both in relation to the issues of migration and transnationalism, and in reference to some of the similarities I traced between Turkey and Algeria, is religion. Mostly Pamuk and to some extent Özdamar broach a discussion of the role of Islamic religion and cultural heritage in secular societies in their works. While Pamuk focuses on Turkey's inner conflicts, Özdamar situates her narrator's symbolic experimentation with Arabo-Islamic identity in a central European nation, Germany. It would be worthwhile to bring in Derrida's views about religion into this discussion in more detail, by using some of his other works, such as *Acts of Religion* and "Circumfession," and studying his complex background as a Jewish-Franco-Algerian.

Despite the fact that Derrida was not raised Muslim, as he remarks in an interview titled "This Strange Institution Called Literature," from *Acts of Literature*, "being Jewish and a victim of anti-Semitism didn't spare one the anti-Arab fascism I felt everywhere around me" (39). Derrida's discussion of postcolonial Algerian writers of Arabic background and of his affinities with the Algerian Jewish community, whose religious practices were becoming increasingly transformed owing to French "Christian contamination" (*MO* 54), is relevant to the broader discussion of the co-habitation of diverse religions in Europe. Religion does not take up a lot of space in *Monolingualism*, where Derrida notes that he "will not dwell on these matters," but will be "evoking them in passing" (*MO* 54). However, Derrida's view of religion, its double bind as well as its socio-political aspects, is an important issue that needs to be addressed in a future research project, possibly through an inquiry into the entanglement of different religious practices across Europe and the Mediterranean basin. The Westernist/anti-Westernist division, which these

writers experience and critique, cuts through European/non-European as well as Muslim/Christian divisions. An examination of the role played by religion in determining such hierarchical boundaries would thus contribute to the contemporary debate on the East-West relationship.

In particular, there are certain resemblances in the way that the anti-Westernist Islamic nationalists in Algeria and Turkey relate the ideals of their homeland to the ideals of Europe. There are instances in both Pamuk's and Özdamar's works, *Snow* and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* respectively, where the Muslim and ethnic minority populations in Turkey, who live under the shadow of the secular Turkish state highly influenced by the French political system, identify themselves with the Algerians, who live under the shadow of *la grande nation de la France*. Being a Jew or an Arab in a nation colonized by France, with a pre-dominantly Christian population, may in fact resemble the condition of being a Muslim in a secular nation that has taken the French Revolution as a model for national reformation.

To give a few examples, during the meeting at the Hotel Asia, Ka writes down the "various two-line statements for Europe," (*Snow* 301) expressed by the people at the meeting, which eventually contribute to the making of another poem titled "All Humanity and the Stars." One of these statements is made by a "defeatist in the crowd [who] slyly asked, 'And whatever happened to the millions of Armenians who once lived all across Anatolia, including Kars?' in the course of a long speech about the Crusades... and the Algerian Muslims massacred by the French" (*Snow* 302). The reference to the ongoing Armenian problem in Turkey, whose roots can be traced to the birth of Turkish nationalism in the late 1910s, is likened to the Algerian massacre by French nationalists. Another association between Algerian Muslims and the minority populations in Turkey comes from Blue when he has an intimate conversation with Ka. Blue

makes a reference in passing to the film titled *The Battle of Algiers*³⁰ before he goes on to comment on another film, *Burn*, by the same director. Blue's suggestive commentary on the French oppression of Algeria and the Caribbean revolutions against the Portuguese and English colonialists read as an implicit warning to the Turkish state and to Ka, whom Blue takes to be a mediator between the secular state and the Islamist groups.

In addition to the anti-Westernist nationalisms growing in Algeria and Turkey in response to the imagined figure of the West, another similarity between Turkey and Algeria is the strong military presence in these countries, which function as a shield between the religious nationalists and the secular state. We saw a parody of the tension between religious leader Blue and the secular actor Sunay, who indulges in mimicking the military leaders. In the first chapter, I also mentioned that the coups which took place in Turkey between the 1960s and the 1990s could be seen as manifestations of what Derrida defines as "auto-immune suicide." It is no coincidence that "in developing this idea of an 'auto-immune suicide', Derrida cites as 'typical of all the assaults on democracy in the name of democracy' (*Rogues* 33) the example of Algeria in 1992 when, fearing the election of a radical Islamist party (*FIS*), the state and the leading party suspended the electoral process" (Dooley 144). The religious-secular conflict, which we encounter in Turkey, was experienced on a different level in Algeria, where the *FIS* (*Front Islamique du Salut*/Islamic Salvation Front) was on the verge of seizing political power in 1992, when the coup supported by the old freedom leaders of the *FLN* interfered.

The coups that took place as recently as the 1990s in both Turkey and Algeria draw attention to the fact that in both nations, with a predominantly Muslim population and ruled by a single party for a long period, it takes time for democracy to be established, because the military

³⁰ Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo the film about the Algerian War against the French rule gave rise to political controversy in France and was banned there for five years upon its release due to the popularity and sympathetic treatment of the *FLN*.

acts as the ghost of the single party it initially represented. For example, the Turkish war of independence led by Mustafa Kemal in 1919-1923 was followed by the foundation of the *CHP* (Republican People's Party/*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), Mustafa Kemal's political party which continued to rule the nation in a single party system until 1945. The Turkish military, as the protector of Kemal's ideals, is entitled to interfere in Turkish politics whenever the secular ideals of the Republic come under threat, even as what can be qualified as a threat continues to be vague. The Turkish war of independence took place in the 1920s, and after about 90 years, four military coups, and several political instabilities, the nation is still trying to come to terms with its secular and Muslim identity. Algeria's struggle of independence, on the other hand, ended as recently as the 1960s, and following its liberation, the *FLN* continued for a long period to be the only party in Algeria. Despite the transition to the multi-party system in 1989, the coup of 1992 in Algeria has shown that there is a great deal of work to be done on the way to democracy. Both in Turkey and Algeria, the role of Islam in a secular society and the meaning of democracy remain to be understood. There is a great deal of research to be done about the relationship between religion, military, and secularism in the two nations, and, moreover, in their relation to other nations around the Mediterranean basin such as Morocco and Israel.

The metaphor of entanglement has brought me this far. But it continues to be a resourceful thematic framework for further critical study of insular identity formations across diverse contexts. Entanglements leave their traces on many levels: temporal, romantic, geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious. The writers undertaken in this dissertation emphasize narratives that accommodate the complex interplay of subjectivities and collectivities undulating into one another. In this respect, they save us from the risk of "weaving some veil from the wrong side... as if the necessary passage points of this weaving from the wrong side were places of *transcendence*" (MO 70-71). Remaining critical of circular narratives, which privilege certain

histories over others and perpetuate segregated communities, Pamuk, Özdamar, and Derrida concentrate on the transformative power of the unnamed promise of the future. Even as the promise enfolds a threat, and displays both positive and negative tendencies, it reminds us of the shifting space of passage across indeterminate and permeable borders.

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