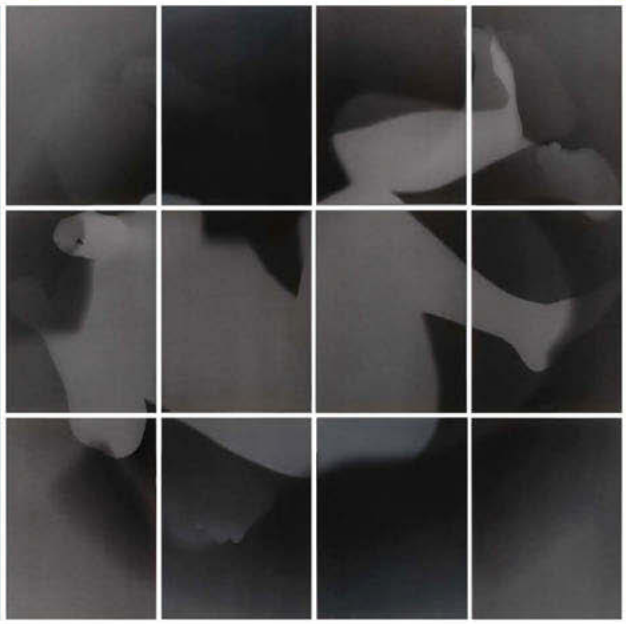
Autobiographical Themes in Turkish Literature: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives

edited by Olcay Akyıldız
Halim Kara
Börte Sagaster



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Contents

Acknowledgements 7

Olcay Akyıldız, Halim Kara, Börte Sagaster
Introduction 9

Olcay Akyıldız
What happens when fact and fiction overlap?
Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai* 17

Theoretical Dimensions

Susanne Enderwitz
Autobiography and "Islam" 35

Özkan Ezli
Lejeune and Foucault or: A name with no identity 43

Herrad Heselhaus
Sentenced to life: Autobiography and aging 51

Gabriele Jancke
Autobiography as social practice in early modern German-speaking areas 65

Past and Present of Autobiographical Writing in Turkey

Derin Terzioğlu
Autobiography in fragments:
Reading Ottoman personal miscellanies in the early modern era 83

Nüket Esen
Menfa: Self-reflection in Ahmet Midhat's memoirs after exile 101

Halim Kara
Relational self-narratives:
Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's autobiographical writings 107

Hülya Adak
Who is afraid of Dr. Rıza Nur's autobiography? 125

Erika Glassen
The sociable Self: the search for identity by conversation (*sohbet*).
The Turkish literary community and the problem of
autobiographical writing 143

Sibel Irzık
Narratives of collectivity and autobiography in Latife Tekin's works 157

Börte Sagaster
"Me, who got into the text, me, who became the text":
Encounter of fact and fiction in contemporary Turkish
autobiographical writing 165

Turkish Literature in Comparative Perspective

Catharina Dufft
The "autobiographical space" in Orhan Pamuk's works 173

Stephan Guth
Writing the self, choosing a language:
Non-Arabic autobiographies by Arabs, non-Turkish by Turks 185

Angelika Neuwirth
Imagining autobiography:
Mahmud Darwish, his poetic persona, and his audience 203

Farzaneh Milani
"*Yeki bud, yeki nabud…*" 219

Contributors 227

Index 231

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Introduction

> I am angry with those who write their memoirs. I say of course nothing against those who have been part of important events either as actors or simply as witnesses. However, though they be referred to as 'memoirs,' even the texts written by such people should be considered the same as history books, and read as such. What anger me are the ones who seek to occupy us by telling us all about only what happened to themselves. And no, I have not forgotten about the great autobiographers like Saint Augustine, Rousseau, and Gide; but they gave us their literary works first, and told us their life stories only later. Furthermore, every principle has its exceptions, so we can say that each of their works is such an exception…[1]

These words that the Turkish literary critic Nurullah Ataç wrote in an article on "memory books" (*hatırat kitapları*) for the popular magazine *Yedigün* in 1934 demonstrate a resentment towards autobiographical texts, a type of text which has in recent years become more widespread in Turkey. The fear that an autobiographer might not "tell the truth," as Ataç complains in this essay, had for a long time led to a general mistrust towards autobiographical writings on the part of Turkish historians, while scholars of Turkish literature meanwhile have ignored the genre as a generic hybrid of history book and novel. However, recent developments in literary and critical studies, such as post-structuralism and postmodernism, feminism and post-colonialism, have profoundly influenced Turkish society and culture. It is a world of "Inter"s, "Post"s, and "Trans"es that we are living in, and in this context the autobiography–or, more generally, autobiographical writing–is a genre that is especially suitable as an object of scholarly interest.

Inspired by this tremendous potential for further scholarly discussion, the Orient-Institut Istanbul and the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, decided in 2002 to hold a symposium on autobiographical writing in Turkey. The initial starting point was to focus fundamentally on whether there were any differences between autobiographical texts in the Middle East and Turkey versus Europe/the "West," as has been argued by scholars such as Franz Rosenthal, Gustav von Grunebaum, Marvin Zonis, Georges Gusdorf, and Philippe Lejeune. Other questions to be tackled included: Does Middle Eastern/Turkish literature really lack introspection? To what degree is the issue of introspection really so central for autobiographical texts in the West? If there are so few texts that fit the classical definitions of "autobiography" even in the West,

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1 Hatıralarını yazanlara kızarım. Bittabi büyük hadiselere, gerek bir iş görerek, gerek sadece şahit sıfatı ile karışmış olanlara bir diyeceğim yok; fakat onlarınkileri–isimleri istediği kadar "hatırat" olsun–gene bir tarih kitabı sayıp öyle okuyabiliriz. Benim kızdığım sırf kendi başlarından geçenleri anlatarak bizi alâkadar etmek isteyenlerdir. Saint Augustin, Rousseau, Gide gibi büyük hatıratçıları unutmuyorum; fakat onlar bizi evvelâ eserleri ile celbetmiş sonra hayatlarını anlatmışlardır. Hem her kaidenin istisnaları vardır; diyelim ki onların eseri de birer istisnadır. Nurullah Ataç: "Hatırat Kitapları," *Yedigün* No. 58, 18 April 1934. 5-6.

shouldn't we revise these definitions? The aim of our prospective symposium was to contribute to the discussion of such questions, which began to be posed in the 1990s with regard to autobiographical writings in both Western and non-Western cultures and literatures. We decided to take up "autobiographical writing" *rather than* "autobiography" because the former enables us to use a larger framework. We avoid the term "autobiography" because of its exclusive and reductionist implications and undertones, preferring instead the term "autobiographical writing," which is inclusive of all self-narratives and presentations, such as memoirs, confessions, diaries and personal notes, and autobiographical fiction and poetry.

The symposium, which took place at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, on 15-17 May 2003, consisted of scholarly papers on topics ranging from recent developments in autobiographical studies to practices of autobiographical writing in Europe and the Middle East in comparative perspective, and finally to the questions of self and the Other, history and community, and fact and fiction in Turkish literature. This collection is based on substantially revised versions of the papers presented at the symposium. It starts in a rather unconventional manner, that is, by relating its own autobiography. In her triple-layered text, in which she relates the story of her own speech and article parallel to the story of the symposium and this collection, all of which is wrapped around a core text analyzing the autobiographical novel of Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai*, Olcay Akyıldız paves the way for the articles that follow. Akyıldız states that, although the author does not point out the autobiographical features of her text, critical studies on Özdamar's novel have usually approached it as autobiographical fiction. In order to consider the authenticity of Özdamar's story, Akyıldız starts by looking at the question of fact and fiction in the novel. However, admitting the failure of such an approach, Akyıldız instead goes on to focus upon how Özdamar succeeds in combining the public story of the Turkish Republic with her own private story of the same years.

The three chapters of this book are entitled "Theoretical Dimensions," "The Past and Present of Autobiographical Writing in Turkey," and "Comparative Perspectives." The articles in the first chapter vary in terms of the specific issues they address, but they all have one thing in common: their opposition to essentialist and ontological distinctions in conventional autobiographical studies mentioned above. The first part of this collection opens with Susanne Enderwitz's article in which she offers a critical survey of autobiographical studies focusing upon the Muslim world as their subject. Attempting to challenge the established norms of the Western oriented concept of autobiography, Enderwitz argues that the European humanities' concern with autobiography, which started in the seventies of the last century, only recently has begun to be taken up in the field of Islamic studies. For decades, Franz Rosenthal's *Die arabische Autobiographie* (1937), with its unfavorable judgment on classical Islamic autobiography, went more or less uncontested. From the second half of the nineties onward, however, a number of

studies of Modern Arabic autobiographies appeared and served to reformulate questions of methodology. One of the most recent publications, *Interpreting the Self* (Dwight F. Reynolds, Ed., [2001]) is thoroughly concerned with classical autobiography, i.e., with autobiography from within a predominantly Islamic structured society. Contrary to Rosenthal and others, *its major aim is the inclusion—and not exclusion—of as many texts as possible within the autobiographical genre.*

Like Enderwitz, Özkan Ezli also provides a critical evaluation of scholarly approaches to autobiographical writing. He asserts that scholarly discussions on the definition of autobiographical narratives in the West have focused fundamentally on the partition of reality and fiction. By comparing Philippe Lejeune's famous definition of autobiography from the 1970s with the ideas of Michel Foucault in his lecture, "What is an author?" Ezli argues that Lejeune's definition of autobiography ignores the inherent uncertainty of writing. This is because, he states, for Lejeune there is an authentic reference if the text is signed with a proper name. This autobiographical pact, as it is called by Lejeune, equates the author with the narrator, ensuring both his/her identity and authenticity. In contrast to Lejeune's understanding, Ezli insists that the division between reality and fiction is actually a discursive one, in the Foucaultian sense, and not one that can refer to the reality beyond the autobiographical discourse.

Herrad Heselhaus continues Ezli's theoretical discussion of autobiographical writing by looking at the question of autobiography and age. While there are many studies on the "auto" and the "graphy" of autobiography by literary critics like Jacques Derrida, Philippe Lejeune, and Paul DeMan, Heselhaus claims that the "bio" element has been relatively neglected. Heselhaus aims to contribute to filling in this gap with her study on "autobiography and aging." Even though autobiographical texts vary in their patterns of textual organization (and not only according to genre: memoirs, confessions, diaries, anecdotes, and fiction), Heselhaus says, they tend to follow "the course of life." As the autobiographic text unfolds, the related life continues. But yet another highly important aspect of autobiographies is memory. The autobiography *per se* is immanent, of this world. While it reaches a definitive conclusion, its author (and hero) is still alive, maybe famous, and certainly old. In the theories of the psychology of aging, "biographic analysis" is used as a means of understanding the aging process as well as the construction of personal identity. The literary genre of autobiography is certainly at the very core of this problem. What is screened by the threefold term of "auto," "bio," and "graphy" is the fundamental human experience of time as life and memory.

This part of the collection ends with Gabriele Jancke's discussion of autobiography as social space in early modern Germany. Taking the communicative aspect of autobiographical writing as her central point, Jancke proposes a new approach to autobiographical studies. According to her, scholars active in this field should contextualize autobiographical texts in their social surroundings and

look at the texts' languages and audiences. Such an approach, she claims, will enable us to reconstruct the writers' ways of using autobiographical writings as social practice. Concentrating on autobiographical material from the early modern period, Jancke concludes that this approach will broaden our understanding of individual texts–for example, that of Nicolaus Cusanus–as well as our range of theoretical and methodological tools in autobiography studies.

The second part of this book, entitled "The Past and Present of Autobiographical Writing in Turkey," forms the "main body" of the discussion. It focuses on a number of examples of autobiographical narratives in Turkish literature from a variety of periods. It starts with Derin Terzioğlu's analysis of autobiographical practice in Ottoman Turkey. Terzioğlu more specifically examines the recent discovered personal miscellanies of scrapbooks produced by Ottoman literati from 1500 to 1800 in order to show the practice of life writing in a non-Western culture from that period. She addresses questions such as what these personal narratives meant to their composers and how they were perceived and read. She argues that a substantial portion of literary production that might easily be considered " autobiographical" today was not perhaps perceived as such in Ottoman times; however, the Ottoman literati appear relatively conscious in their textual utilization of the autobiographical register. Terzioğlu concludes that some Ottoman literati also participated in certain practices of reading and writing that were conducive to autobiography in the wider sense.

Nüket Esen analyzes the first Western style autobiography in Turkish literature, the work *Menfa* written by the first Turkish novelist, Ahmet Midhat, in 1876. Esen argues that in *Menfa*, Ahmet Midhat attempts to reason out his political choices, which will be more clearly established after Abdülhamid ascends the throne. Ahmet Midhat would eventually go on to write three infamous books about the Ottoman Empire in which he expressed his support for Abdülhamid's autocratic regime. *Menfa* is the first step towards Ahmet Midhat's political stance in opposition to the Young Ottomans' political ideas.

Halim Kara's study deals with the autobiographical narratives of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, one of the leading figures of modern Turkish literature. Kara attempts to show that Yakup Kadri actively participated not only in the cultural, social, and political events of the last years of the Ottoman Empire, but that he contributed to the Turkish national struggle as well. Like many members of his generation, Yakup Kadri was also an active figure in the foundation of the new Turkish Republic and an advocate of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's social, cultural, and political policies. Therefore, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings superficially appear to describe the story of his life as a part of a society, nation, or history. Kara maintains that Yakup Kadri's narratives disclose more about his personality and individual identity than one might assume. He concludes that Yakup Kadri regards identity as relational, and that the autobiographical narratives

he produces are also relational, because the story of his nation provides the key to his own individual identity and character.

Hülya Adak's paper looks at the question of oppositional autobiographical writings in Turkey. According to her, prior to the delivery of *Nutuk*, the political opposition to Mustafa Kemal's single-party regime was silenced and some of the opponents fled to Europe to avoid persecution by the Independence Tribunals. Unable to publish or narrate their version of the history of the Ottoman Empire, the Independence Struggle, and the establishment of the Turkish Republic in Turkey, these political leaders and writers wrote their autobiographies in exile. In the sixties, both the oppositional autobiographies written in exile and the ones written in Turkey were published only after undergoing serious censorship. The publication of these autobiographies, however, did not bring them credibility because, as a sacred text of the Turkish Republic, the premises in *Nutuk* remained mostly unchallenged. Her article analyzes one such oppositional autobiography, Dr. Rıza Nur's *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, in the way the text, written clandestinely in the twenties and entrusted to libraries in Paris and London, narrates Rıza Nur's involvement in modern Turkish history in a tensile relationship with the narration of events as told in *Nutuk*. While approaching Nur's memoir in relation to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Nutuk* and in the context of the other oppositional autobiographies written by Rıza Nur's contemporaries, Hülya Adak attempts to reevaluate the significance of Rıza Nur and his much discredited self-narrative in modern Turkish history.

Erika Glassen talks about a different type of self-representation that became very popular in Turkish literature in the early twentieth century: collections of biographical essays (*edebiyat anıları*). She emphasizes that by writing biographical sketches, which are generally first published in magazines and newspapers, and then later having them bound together in a book, the author of such works assembles around herself/himself a group of intellectuals and famous poets, as well as her/his former teachers of the older generation, and friends and colleagues of her/his own generation. Thus does s/he represent herself/himself as a sociable personality, a member of the literary community. The literary community seems to be a memory community creating "family history" by conversational memorizing, which means permanent real or imaginative conversation. The individual writer participates in the collective identity of the community but at the same time asserts his position among the others, and his autobiographical memory contributes important material to the communicative memory.

The contribution of Sibel Irzık focuses on another aspect of communality in connection with autobiographical writing. Irzık analyzes the autobiographical elements in the works of Latife Tekin, one of the most important female authors of the post-1980s, as a "claim to a communal voice," which is supported by the author's initial attribution of a political meaning to her writing. The autobiographical claim of the author contrasts in her first two novels with the imper-

sonal narrative voice of her writings, which Irzık sees as an "attempt to disavow authority and appropriation by concealing their own written and autobiographical character". In her latest novel, Irzık argues, Tekin marks her text from within as autobiographical by using the pronoun "I"; however, Tekin still does not present her life as it exists outside her writing, but rather as a contest between her life and writing.

Börte Sagaster's article deals with general trends in Turkish autobiographical literature since the 1980s. In the perception of writers as well as of readers and critics, autobiography has shifted within recent decades from the field of "history" towards the vast territory of fiction. Consciousness about the unattainability of (historical, personal) "truth" shapes many contemporary Turkish writers' attitude towards autobiographical writing. Consequently, Turkish literature has become more experimental when dealing with autobiographical themes.

The third and last section of the collection starts with Catharina Dufft's examination of the concept of "autobiographical space" by means of a comparative analysis of Orhan Pamuk's literary work. Based upon Theodor W. Adorno's argument that childhood experience plays an important role in "autobiographical space," Dufft aims to show that Nişantaşı can be seen as an important early "autobiographical space" for Orhan Pamuk's work. For this, she focuses specifically on Pamuk's short story "Bir Hikaye: Pencereden Bakmak," and compares it with texts by two other authors, Theodor Adorno and Marcel Proust. In doing so, she demonstrates how authors from different times and areas have used similar strategies to make their life stories fruitful for their literary works.

Stephan Guth's article on the narratives of three Arab authors and one Turkish author who did not use their mother tongue to write their autobiographies shows just how manifold the motives of language migrants preferring to write their autobiographies in a "foreign" language can be. This paper is also an attempt to introduce some new aspects to the theories on language choice in literature, theories which necessarily deal with autobiographies written by bilinguals. Guth's article is followed by Angelika Neuwirth's discussion on the famous Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish, extending the field of autobiographical writing to the genre of poetry. Neuwirth shows us how Darwish's poetical image of the martyr and the changes it underwent over time can be read with respect to an underlying autobiographical text or, as Neuwirth calls it, "meta-literary" autobiography.

The book ends, as it started, with an article that is rather autobiographical itself. In her contribution on the Iranian poetess Forugh Farrokhzad, Farzaneh Milani links Farrokhzad's life to her own life as an exile living in the United States. She tells us how her research on Forugh Farrokhzad's biography together with her gradual acclimatization to American society shaped the course of her own life. In the course of her research, during which she faced many obstacles due to the difficulties of obtaining details about an Iranian woman's life, Milani was first led to the conclusion that life-narratives were misfits in the Islamic world

while the Western world was completely open and frank about matters of the self. However, later on she came to realize that neither is the "East" as closed as it seems, nor is the "West" as open as it is so often claimed to be. This is because Milani has come to the conclusion that telling about oneself can take on many different and varied faces. Iranians narrate their lives in many different ways–in poetry for instance, as Farrokhzad does–and, as Milani discovered, it was only necessary to change perspective in order to find the right places to look for these stories. Therefore, Milani's version of Farrokhzad's life narrative with *yeki bud yeki nabud* (once upon a time), just like the fairytales she heard as a child, and Ezli's insistence on writing's inherent uncertainty, can actually be read as a response to Nurullah Ataç's concern regarding the question of truth in life stories. Seeing as "truth" is impossible, people should tell and share their own versions of stories, as we hope to have done in this collection.

What happens when fact and fiction overlap? Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei*

Olcay Akyıldız

What I will attempt to do first in this text is to share with the reader my personal adventure with Özdamar's text—an autobiographical report of the process of reading an autobiographical novel[1]—and then, the once again personal yet this time "agonizing" adventure of turning this process into a "meaningful" article...

October 1998: I am in Germany for my PhD, my first days in Tübingen. I don't recall exactly how or why, but I am reading Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Life is a Caravanserai*.[2] Following a four month German course, this is the first German book I am reading in Germany. Considering the language Özdamar uses, a rather unfortunate choice for me! Many critics define Özdamar's language as a "strange" or "Turkish accented" German. There are also those who refer to it as "Broken German."[3]

Anyway, let me get back to my initial adventure of reading the text. I had picked up the book from the university library without knowing why I chose it—of course, later on I did consider the possibility that it could have been an un-

1 I find exploring this personal experience significant in two ways. First, how I approached this controversial text as a beginning German reader and as someone who knew very well one of the two languages and cultures the text is constructed upon—Turkish—and just beginning to know the other—German. Second, within the context of fact and fiction, how "my fact" and "my fiction" relate to the "fact" and "fiction" of the text.

2 Even though I primarily use the original German text as my point of reference, I will also use here the English and Turkish versions. Both because the article is in English and also because I insistently stress the differences created by this language issue, in some footnotes I will include quotes from the book in all three languages.

3 Karen Jankowsky, in her article, which also discusses the controversies arising from Özdamar receiving the Bachmann award in 1991 as the first "non-native speaker of German," also examines such "positive" and "negative" criticisms of the book. Jankowsky also raises a discussion on the issue of multicultural understanding, pointing out that many critics read the text circumscribed into absolute orientalist frame (See Jankowsky 1997). A very good definition for the text comes from Luise von Flotow, who has translated the book into English. She calls it a *Zwittertext* (Hybridtext), which literally means a hermaphrodite text. On the language of the text, also see Seyhan 1996. In her article, Seyhan writes "Although written in German, the literary discourse of Turkish-German writers reflects the living memory of their first language; in fact it exists in the hospitable idiom of Turkish. Therefore a genuine understanding of this literature requires both historical reading and semiotic analysis," in reference to Turkish writers living in Germany and writing in German (418). And Musa Yaşar Sağlam (Sağlam 2001) regards Özdamar's use of language as a part of the narrative technique.

conscious association... The name Özdamar rang familiar somehow, but I couldn't be sure. I started reading the book: on the one hand I was mesmerized, on the other, confused. The language was very strange, almost defiant, challenging me: "Go on, understand me if you can." I wasn't able to figure it out: "Was my German really bad, or was this text very different from those I was accustomed to reading?" Besides these reactions, I was constantly trying to figure out the Turkish translations–sometimes merely two word phrases–of the long German sentences I was reading.

To give an example: "Mir geht es ein bisschen besser als einem Schwiegersohn, der bei seinen Schwiegereltern wohnen muss" (in English "I feel a little better than a son-in-law who has to live with his parents-in-law," and in Turkish "içgüveysinden hallice"–only two words). How frugal and how much it says to "us" Turks! Actually, just this example can give an idea of the kind of language used in the book. The author translates some Turkish sayings mot-a-mot to German, as well as writing some of the Turkish codes in German.[4]

I had a Norwegian housemate in Tübingen. She loved to read out loud passages from this book with long Turkish sentences, Arabic prayers, and Turkish children's songs. Every night, she'd walk around with my book in her hand and ask, "Tamam mi?"[5] Though I couldn't understand why exactly, the book created a magical atmosphere for my Norwegian friend. Even though she had not read the entire book, she said she associated it with *A Thousand and One Nights*. Özdamar's text kept calling me, on the other hand, to a culture and geography I knew all too well, yet was forced to re-discover through a bizarre and hybrid language. Graveyards, prayers, fairy tales, legends, old wives' tales, the beauties of Istanbul, years of the Democrat Party... All of these are familiar to me, but I need to "jump over" the language of Özdamar's text! And what Özdamar is doing is not just "translating" all these to another language, but to another culture.

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4 Almost all the researchers who have written on the book have discussed this point in great detail. "Obwohl der Roman auf Deutsch verfasst und für das deutsche Lesepublikum bestimmt ist, stellt er in Wirklichkeit einen orientalischen Bildungsroman dar, in dem die Autorin den Versuch unternahm, eine neue, ihrem eigenen Status einer deutsch schreibenden, aber türkisch denkenden Schriftstellerin gerechte Erzähltechnik zu entwickeln. Ein Merkmal dieser neuen Erzähltechnik sind türkische Ausdrücke, Sprichwörter und Redensarten, die die Autorin in grosser Zahl verwendet und nach den Regeln der 'formalen Äquivalenz' ins Deutsche übersetzt, um auf diesem Wege die Kultur und Denkformen der türkischen Gesellschaft, die in Deutschland nicht allzu bekannt sein dürften, dem deutschen Leser zu vermitteln" (Sağlam 2001: 143).

5 This word appearing before us in Turkish throughout the text is one of the refrains of the book. As the author is describing her relationship with her brother, she frequently repeats this word of approval her brother uses when he is trying to convince her to do something: "Tamam mı?" A small anecdote on the subject came from Louise von Flotow, who translated the book from German to English, during her speech at the Boğaziçi University. The translator, who doesn't speak Turkish, has learned the meaning of "*tamam*" once and for all.

December 1998: This time I am on an Istanbul-Ankara bus trip with my grandmother. I ask her about the Özdamar family, which I vaguely recall her being acquainted with personally. My grandmother, who loves to make up tales, collect family stories, recount memories, begins to tell the “story” of the entire family. I am aware of the fact that she is making up the parts she can’t remember, and anyway each recollection is a rewriting of its own, that she is embellishing the bare and slim truth with her style, but I don’t let her see this. What actually astonishes me is the resemblance between what my grandma tells, the sentences she constructs, and even the adjectives she chooses with those Özdamar employs in her autobiographical novel. This is almost like re-hearing the same story from a different perspective.[6] Yet the world this different perspective creates, even the adjectives picked out for this world, are identical to those of the author. Of course my grandma does not go through the various Turkish equivalents of the word penis one after another the way Özdamar does or try to depict the sound of one eating sunflower seeds by writing “çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit çit” for pages... She does not because my grandma is a different sort of player than Emine Sevgi Özdamar. My grandma does not know that Emine Sevgi Özdamar is a writer, that she has written a book and that in that book she has written her own story, her family’s story, and the story of Turkey of the time. I wait until she finishes her own version of the story to tell her this fact. I do not want to disrupt the magic of her storytelling. When I tell her about the situation, it’s my grandma’s turn to be surprised and excited. She is more stirred as I tell her about the details of the book. She utters one sentence after another, makes suggestions: “I will show you the photograph of the sky eyed grandmother mentioned in the book when we get home.” “Sevgi’s father Mustafa, yes yes, he was very handsome. I must have a few pictures of him as well.”... “Well, right, they did have a very different life. And we used to always say it would make a good movie.” ... “Do you know that your mother and the girl in the story used to play together in Istanbul? The neighborhood she is talking about is Kadıköy...”

6 In his paper in which he explores the difference between a literary figure (writer, poet) writing an autobiography and any other famous/popular person (soccer player, politician, etc.) writing one, Codrescu (1994) also proposes questions like: What is significant in an autobiographical text? What is recounted, or how are things recounted? And whose story is it? Codrescu depicts how when memories are in question, people who have been at the same place at the same time can tell such different stories through examples from his own life. The author, who underlines the significance of perspective when referring to a period of time or a specific event, argues that if you ask someone to tell you about yourself, the incidents and moments they speak of will not be centered around you but rather around those moments of the person you’ve asked for the opinion. And he diversifies the situation with examples. In an exactly similar fashion, the moments my grandmother emphasized in the life of the Özdamar family were the moments when she or someone else from her family was the “hero.”

As I gaze out the bus window, I have (had) this question on my mind: "What happens when fact and fiction overlap?" That day, during that bus trip I had envisioned that I could write a beautiful autobiographical text under that ostentatious title, but actually I wasn't really working on autobiography. When Börte Sagaster came to me a few years after that bus trip with the autobiography project, and we started reading on the subject, I would return to that bus trip, now long out of my mind, with the speed of lightening.

September 2002: We are in Mainz at the WOCMES.[7] Our informal discussion with Börte to organize a symposium on "Autobiography in Turkish Literature" has by now been formalized. We had decided to organize the symposium on a date to be determined as the Boğaziçi University Department of Turkish Language and Literature in collaboration with the Orient Institut. Now the time has come to establish the framework, themes, and participants of the symposium. (In consideration of the mental well-being of the readers, I will not mention the tedious details of how to find funding, arrange accommodations, etc.).

Like all initial stages, our preparatory phases were rather disorganized. When we decided this couldn't go on this way, Halim Kara suggested we form a reading group. This way we would also create the space to improve ourselves academically and establish a theoretical background while concurrently taking care of the technical preparations. During the following weeks and months, with Halim Kara, Börte Sagaster, and other friends in our reading group,[8] we undertook theoretical readings on autobiography.

January 2003: As is the case with every autobiographical text, I am sure there are distortions and gaps in relation to dates and events in this text I am writing as well, but if I remember correctly, the sessions of the symposium and presenters were more or less determined in January. As the steering committee we were "harassing" the participants to finalize their paper topics and titles, but meanwhile, I myself hadn't even yet decided on what topic I would speak. The many months of reading and discussion on a topic I hadn't really thought around before—autobiography, self, etc.—seemed completely futile, and so I was looking at my friends disconcertedly and saying things like, "I have so many other things to do, maybe I shouldn't present a paper after all." Each time, I got the same evident answer: "No, as one of the organizers, you don't have such an option." Thus I was going home every evening preparing myself for yet another sleepless night.

Around this time I also went back to Özdamar's book. I recalled the discussions in our reading group on Latife Tekin's novels about the similarities between

7 World Congress of Middle Eastern Studies.

8 Since we are in an autobiographical and sincere text, I see no problem in saluting them in this footnote. After all, aren't the identities we acquire, the lifestories we write for ourselves determined to an extent by other people and memories that enter our lives? Our other friends: Fatih Altuğ, Arzu Atik, Nüket Esen, Özkan Ezli, Ayten Sönmez, Derin Terzioğlu, Zehra Toska.

the curious child narrator of *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* (Dear Shameless Death) and the naive, "untamed" narrator of *Life is a Caravanserai*. I was thinking I could compare the two texts. As I was lethargically lost in reading and meditation, Sibel Irzık's presentation had already made its way into the symposium program: "Narratives of Collectivity and Autobiography in Latife Tekin's Works." "No," I said, "let me give this up as well." I was persistently rereading Özdamar's text. This time I read it both in Turkish and in German. Our weekly discussions and each text I read were making me think that the question "what happens when fact and fiction overlap"– which had initially fascinated me so–was not really a very meaningful question. First of all the answer to this could very easily be: "So, let's say they overlap, so what?" Furthermore, who could argue that my grandmother's version of the story was the "factual" one? Wasn't the version she recounted another fiction of her own construct? Maybe the question had to be posed differently: What happens when one fiction (narrative) overlaps with another? Let's say the two fictive texts overlapped! What could happen, except for a sense of "awe," of surprise? One is also in awe of the crimson of daybreak, so what?

Anyway, I did not ask the second question, I was stuck on the first one, and by the time I realized the dead-end I had entered by naming my paper as such, it was too late to turn back. It was so late; I'd be ashamed to put down the date here. Of course the fact that one of the themes of the symposium was "Fact and Fiction in Autobiographical Writings" was another incident propelling me down my dead end street. There, the session for this ostentatious title was also in place.

Another problem was whether Özdamar's text could be considered within the scope of Turkish literature or not. Should I rather make my presentation in the comparative perspectives session? When the day of my presentation arrived, I didn't miss the opportunity to utilize the problematization of situating the text in my speech and thus gain time.

13 May 2003: I guess somewhere up above someone was feeling sorry for this pitiful soul struggling at a point of no return. As I was checking my email in distress, I was a little enlivened by a presentation announcement from Saliha Paker. Luise Von Flotow, who had translated the novel *Life is a Caravanserai* from German to English, was at the university and she was holding a speech the next day under a title which promised to explore the issues I was interested in. Now, all my hopes geared towards Flotow's speech; I am waiting. I get up from the computer. "Flotow's speech," I say, "will, I'm sure, open up my mind, and inspired by that, I will finish my own text."

14 May 2003: I listen to the speech entitled "Translating Marginality: A Turkish-German *Zwittertext*" with great excitement. First of all, it feels good to listen to someone who has derived as much pleasure from the text as I have, and as Flotow is speaking I take a lot of notes. Listening to her on one hand, on the other I am thinking about how to complete my own speech.

15 May 2003: The first day of the symposium. We are all very tired and excited. Everything goes really well. The presentations are enriched by rather fruitful discussions. In the evening, as the time of the last session approaches, a slight cramp in my stomach is making itself felt. I do not say this to anyone, but except for the two pages I have written about our bus trip with my grandmother, I don't have a text yet. Of course I have a hard time confessing this, being one of the symposium organizers who have suffocated the participants with "deadline" e-mails. There is a welcome cocktail for all the participants in the evening at the Orient-Institut. During the few hours I spend there, all that's twirling around jumping in my head is, "I need to go home, I need to write my speech, this is the end."

16 May 2003: Wee hours of the morning... There's still no completed presentation text. I write a two page introduction: more accurate to call it a rambling. As I am referring to the undefinability of the text, I am considering and how I don't know under which section I can classify it, I also briefly summarize the symposium at large. Following that, I add my grandmother's story which is an "all ready" and the final point I reach: "So what if my grandmother's story and Özdamar's text have overlapped." Feels as if the font of the words "so what" keep getting larger and larger on the screen. I call Börte and Halim. Not to panic them as well, I only tell part of the truth. That I'm coughing a lot and have a fever–which is true–and that I'll be able to make it only around noon, but that everything is okay, and I will deliver my presentation at 16:00. They console me with assuaging words.

16 May 2003, 11 o'clock: "So what" is still flashing on the screen in large fonts. Across the screen, me as a ruined soul on the chair, we stare at each other. Suddenly, a flash of lightening in my mind. I tell myself to stop the self-torturing, be honest and decide to confess that the speech actually undermines its own principal argument. And I write down the confession sentence and conclude the paper as such: "End of my paper." But due to academic regulations I was supposed to speak for 15 more minutes and, having read the novel twice, I know that I can't fill up this time searching for the answer to my beginning question. But I've still got a shot because *Life is a Caravanserai* is also a rather interesting and rich text even just in terms of its narrative structure. If there are any questions regarding the relation between narrative techniques and autobiography, my answer would be to highlight how Özdamar has interwoven the public and the private. Actually, following the line in which I confessed that the question I posed wouldn't take me anywhere, my hands type incessantly for an hour and I finish my speech without further agony.

As to what I've written:

> As Özdamar is recounting her own story within the context of Turkey's history, the private and public spheres overlap. Azade Seyhan defines the book as a self-declared novel in veiled autobiographical form.[9] – Wasn't I doing something along the same lines? I was writing a kind of speech autobiography. As I've said the ostentatious question had self-destructed and there was only one thing to be done: to tell the story of this speech, and then this article.
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> I quote Seyhan: "In a symbolic, poetic, and folkloristic reordering of the past, she restores for the second generation of Turks living in Germany the history of their now foreign homeland."[10] The best example of this is the surrealist section, where the grandfather weaves a carpet from his beard. Through the symbols woven on the carpet, the reader has the opportunity to follow roughly the history of the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the early years of the Turkish Republic. But this story has been woven around/into the grandfather's own autobiographical story. Just like the bowknots of the carpet, the symbols and events form an inseparable whole. On one hand the grandfather is living his personal adventure on the carpet, while on the other historical events, which can be considered milestones, are taking place. [11]

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9 Seyhan 1996: 420

10 Seyhan 1996: 420. With Seyhan's point, another question arises: the target reader group. Did Özdamar have a certain reader profile in mind as she wrote this book? It is obvious that authors cannot ultimately decide who the "actual readers" of the literary texts will be. Depending on in which language one reads Özdamar's book, there will be many different "readings." We have known since Barthes's "plural text" that there might be as many different readings and interpretations as there are different readers. Maybe if we limit ourselves here to the different readings based on the text's language, we will have a situation that is easier to deal with. Reading the book in German without knowing any Turkish will be a very different experience from reading the book again in German but knowing Turkish. Around the same time I was beginning to take an interest in Özdamar, a joint master's thesis was written on the subject in Tübingen. A Turkish student living in Germany and a German student who didn't know any Turkish had examined some of Özdamar's texts around the questions they formed and discussed the answers together. I had noticed how different the perspectives of a second generation Turk brought up in Germany and a Turk whose only relation to Germany was the two years she spent there for her PhD (me) could be through my discussions with these two friends. For one of us, the native language was Turkish and German was a language learned later on. The other was more comfortable speaking and writing in German than in Turkish. Once again affirming the target audience Seyhan refers to, Mukaddes (the student with Turkish origin) was completely unaware of Ottoman-Turkish history since she hadn't gone to school in Turkey. That is why she also expected to learn something concrete from the historical events Özdamar recounted in a magical reality.

11 "Soldiers said in unision, 'Grandfather, tell us a story!' Grandfather began to speak and his unshaven beard started growing on his face, and the beard began to weave a carpet. The soldiers lit a lamp to see the pictures in the carpet. At the beginning of the carpet it was snowing in the mountains. My grandfather was walking through the mountains as a very young man with a very young girl and many animals. […] The dying animals were lying on the carpet, making the path Ahmet and the young woman from the Caucasus took to Anatolia. […] then a German flag was fluttering next to a Turkish flag in the carpet. Now Bismarck was building the Baghdad railway on the carpet, to the Turkish oil fields, and on his way Bismarck saw the city of Pergamon and politely asked the Sultan, who was so afraid of opposition from the people that his suits always fitted poorly because his tailor

The narrator of *Life is a Caravanserai* is a child. This, combined with the strange and broken usage of German, makes the language of the book naive and childish to a great extent. But when this language is translated into Turkish or English, it loses its most powerful weapon in its original form, namely the childishness and innocence. The poetry of the sections thought out in Turkish and translated mot-a-mot to German lose all their poetry in the translations. The double stratum inherent in the original book (a Turkish German mixed text) is lost when it is translated to Turkish. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of a sub-text in Turkish. Maybe this can explain why the book hasn't been read a lot by Turkish readers. With the vanishing of the double plane, we must accept that the Turkish version of the book is a bit boring, which explains why it is so hard to find on bookstore shelves in Turkey.[12]

If we read this text as the life story of a girl child, we can say that the narrative begins at the earliest point possible: in her mother's womb. "I was standing there in my mother's belly between the bars of ice, I wanted to hold on grabbed the ice and slipped and landed in the same spot, knocked on the wall, nobody heard" (Özdamar 2000: 1). The narrator sets forth in her story by telling us what she has perceived–or to be more precise, things she could have potentially perceived–in her mother's womb. She talks of what she's heard, what she's smelled. She recounts dialogues between her mother and

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was only allowed to take measure from a distance. Bismarck politely asked the Sultan whether he could take a few stones from the city of Pergamon back to Germany as a souvenir. 'In my kingdom there are so many stones, let the heathen have a few of them too.' […] At the head of the horseman a very handsome officer, blond hair, blue eyelashes. The soldiers in the black train were looking at the carpet suddenly stood up and saluted this officer. The blue-eyed man spoke from carpet, 'Soldiers, how are you?' The soldiers in the train said in unison, 'Very well, Atatürk!' and remained at attention, their right hand at their foreheads. […]

"The enemy's gone, they said. Long live the Republic, they said, the men in tails and bowler hats."

[…]

My grandfather took a drag from his cigarette and his beard continued weaving the carpet. He was smoking on the carpet too" (Özdamar 2000: 24-32).

12 Maybe the "ideal" reader of the book should know both languages. The richness resulting from "double" languageness of the text gets lost not only in the Turkish translation of the text, but also when it is read without knowing any Turkish. What is at stake here is not only the not having access to the subtext. The mot-a-mot German translations of Turkish sayings create a completely different space. A reader who doesn't know Turkish for example is alienated from the text when s/he reads the word by word German translation of the saying "*kurtlarını dökmek*" (shedding one's worms). What do those people have in mind going to the movies to shed their worms (*seine Würmer ausschütteln*), s/he starts to think. On the other hand, another reader who knows of the saying, merely smiles at the absurdity and sometimes poetry of this direct translation. Sağlam 2001 explores such direct translations in the text and how they may be percieved through examples. Translating all these marginalities and plays on words into a second language has been an effort in itself. In her article in which she relates this experience, Luise von Flotow states the following on the translation of the novel she considers under the catagory of minority literature: "Özdamar's 'broken' German presents the greatest challenge in translating *Karawanserai* into English. Preserving or rendering this foreigness seems to be desirable, since it is an integral part of the source text" (Flotow 2000: 68). And then she explores the translation issues she titles syntactic disruption, imagery, obscenities, and the direct use of Turkish idioms and expressions with examples.

> others. They are on a train; her mom is going to Malatya–her father's hometown–to deliver her second child. Then all of a sudden a more imperious–an omniscient meta-narrator's–voice recounts to us a paragraph on the characteristics of traveling in those years. "I lost consciousness and only woke up one August morning and cried immediately. I wanted to go back to the water room and see the film with soldiers again, the film was torn, where did the soldiers go?" Our narrator is born by now. Two pages later we see her gazing at the sea for the first time –she and her family move to Istanbul. From her mother's sentences, we understand that we are in the 1950s–"The Americans are coming! We are going to look at the Americans." (Özdamar 2000: 11)–and immediately thereafter, describing the ceremony held for the Americans, she says: "They were not Americans; it was the Persian Shah Reza Pehlevi and his wife" (Özdamar 2000: 11).
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> When the narrator's older brother asks his mother what an American is, she replies: "An American is someone who does not have to eat, they just take pills. Americans take one pill, that's their lunch, in the evening they take another pill, that's their supper" (Özdamar 2000: 11). Thus the narrator has both made a reference to a popular urban legend of the era and raised another small question in the reader's mind regarding strangeness, otherness and alterity.
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> I have chosen this example to signify the speed of the text, because all of this plus a few events I skipped take place within the first 20-22 pages of the book. As the author attempts to tell her own personal narrative in conjunction with public history, she is also privatizing and personalizing the public in a sense. What is implied with the word privatize: we follow the historical events and political agenda of the era through the child-narrator's eyes and with her naive language.

The post-conference period: Some time after the conference, we send the participants e-mails saying that we will publish the papers and stating the requirements and deadlines for the articles. And anyway, whatever happens happens in the following months and years. While we are pursuing our own ongoing work and responsibilities, we are also trying to turn our own presentations into articles and following up on articles that we receive from other participants. In this period, Halim Kara is living and teaching in Oxford, and Börte Sagaster first in various cities in Germany, then in Cyprus. Istanbul continues to be my primary residence, travelling to Tübingen now and then because of my PhD. Thanks to the merits of technology, we often hold virtual meetings over MSN Messenger.

At the same time, both we as the editors of the book and Louis Fishmann, who is working with us as the English language editor–and who within this period was first based in Istanbul, then went back to the States–are carefully reading the drafts of the articles we receive at different times (inevitably deadlines are postponed). Scattered all around the world, we are trying to coordinate the book. Of course there is nothing of interest in all this. This is the customary publication preparation phase following a conference. There is something that doesn't change. Though slowly, all the articles accumulate. The revised drafts are sent back to the participants. This time they send us back the final versions. Louis goes through the edited versions and sends them to us. The folders I create on my computer are multiplying. "Autobiography-book," "Articles-first drafts," "ar-

ticles-final from Louis," etc.... What does not change is that the only article that has not made it into any of these folders is my article.

A rainy night at the beginning of the summer of 2004: My "fellow traveller" Birhan Keskin and I are speaking of work and such and unfinished projects. She tells me about some of her projects and after a while timidly I open the "Özdamar Autobiography Article" folder on my computer as if unwrapping my wedding dowry, and print out my speech, which I've worked on a bit. I show Birhan what I've written and tell her that I need to make an article with a beginning and an end from it, but that this does not really look possible. It is as if I am waiting for her approval. For her to say, "Leave it Olcay, you can't make this into an article," and my mind will be put at ease. And yet my friend urges me on, skimming through the pages. She tells me how if I work persistently and don't give up on the playful material I have, of course I'll get somewhere. She gives me some clues. She even proposes a title that summarizes the situation. (The title "what happens when fact and fiction overlap" had enticed me at first, yet this ostentious signpost turned out to be a dead-end street, and so I turned back and found myself on the "someties the article creates its own story as well" street…) I tell her at length about the novel and what I am trying to do. I am happy and excited to have the approval of a poet.

February 2005: We decide that we've had enough of our "long-distance working relationship" and so we plan to meet in Istanbul for a three day retreat to finalize the time plan for the book, write the introduction, and find the book's title. In the past months we have gotten together in various combinations of two (Olcay-Louis, Louis-Börte, Börte-Halim, etc.), but we need an ultimate meeting to finalize the book, as virtual meetings are no longer sufficient. We also deserve to pull all-nighters, and drink wine as we work all together.

8 April 2005: We are finally all together at my place in Istanbul. I give Börte and Halim the news I got a few days before our meeting, that Hülya Adak has had a baby. Since the conference in 2003, some of the participants have had babies (Halim, Hülya, Derin), some have started new jobs in completely different places, etc. Life goes on; this book has to be published and I have to somehow record this process.

8 April 2005, evening: The first day, we work on all the material that we have. Three computers are on simultaneously in the apartment. We write the necessary e-mails to clarify some missing points with the authors. I am aware that we need to speak about my article before we move on to work on the introduction. I first want to read a few lines from my attempts so that I can give it up for good if there is no chance anything will come out of this material. As I am reading aloud to Börte and Halim, I also try to explain what I'm trying to do, what the "catch" of the work is. I tell them that since I used an autobiographical technique in my presentation, I have tried to elaborate on that and tell a story. But I am in trouble. I feel like I am neither a gifted narrator like Özdamar nor an excited story-

teller like my grandmother. I can't make it work. That is why whenever I reach an irresolvable point in my writing attempt, I immediately give up, quarreling with my computer, if not life.

Yet as Juliet Mitchell says, "We tell stories to survive." I should also keep telling my story. Actually, beyond this autobiographical narrative structure, there is something else I intend—or rather dream—to do: To make this piece have a language parallel to the one Özdamar uses. In some way I want to write with a Turkish accented English. Let there be no misunderstanding that I am doing this as a cover for my *already* Turkish accented English. I know that if I manage it, then the text will maybe say something. I think to myself maybe I can do this if I write in English and Turkish and then translate it into English, but I don't tell Halim and Börte this much. They are probably already uneasy about this mystery text they haven't seen a line of for months. Still since they are open to new ideas, they support my article to be, which will not resemble other academic articles. Perhaps also because I touch on the story of the symposium, we decide that this can be an "amusing" article immediately following the introduction, independent from the two main chapters of the book, and move on to work on the book's contents.

The next day, 9 April 2005: After a very nice dinner and intense brainstorming session for the title of the book, as our heads are a bit clouded from the wine, I think to myself that this is the right moment and begin to talk about why I can't finish the article, at which points I get stuck and fail to find solutions. One of the problems is that I am trying to both describe how the presentation came into being and the adventure of turning that into this article at the same time. I need to find a "trick" for the leaps in time. Of course there is also the question of overlapping the content with the article's framework. At this point I decide to risk the disjunctions within the text and use the presentation text in parts scattered throughout the piece. The solution I come up with in this respect is: to take a break after the section beginning with Özdamar's child narrator, and to return to the frame text in that interval and then write about the "identity" issue, which I hadn't really been able to address in depth during my presentation in a separate section.[13] In order to get help on the latter, which I haven't yet been able to write, I begin to describe my arguments on the identity issue at that late time of the night:

[13] I must mention that I owe this solution to my friend Christoph Neumann who has contributed to everthing I have written one way or the other. My apologies to him for not recording here the conversation we had at his house in Ortaköy on how I could overcome this perpetual state of work in progress out of concern for not lengthening this article any further.

To begin with, the author, as Azade Seyhan also points out, writes "outside the nation."[14] Furthermore, the narrator is also constantly an "outsider" or the "other" in different contexts throughout the text. As the daughter of a family constantly on the move, from one city to another, from one neighborhood to another, she tries to make herself accepted at each new place. As a child questioning and contesting everything, even within her family, she is always estranged and deviant. There is a rather amusing story about her constant questioning and contesting in the book. The narrator, who doesn't find the "fact" that God is everywhere, all-seeing, and all-knowing, convincing decides to test this. In the bathroom, somewhere where she thinks no one–including God–sees her, she constantly curses God. She keeps doing this while terrified that all-seeing, all-hearing God will hear her and punish her. Concluding that "If he'd heard what I've been saying, he definitely would have punished me," she refutes, in her own right, the argument that God hears and sees everything.

When she starts elementary school, her teacher asks if she has a tail on her behind because she is from Malatya. But a while later when she goes to Malatya where she was born, they call her the girl from Istanbul. For her teacher in Bursa, she is once again the girl from Istanbul:

"He called me girl from Istanbul and praised me everyday for being clever. For him I was the clever girl from Istanbul and for my teacher in Istanbul I had been a Kurd from Anatolia with a tail growing on my ass."

The child-narrator notices at a very early age how relative and random these identity perspectives are. Maybe what renders this text so unclassifiable and uncategorizable is that she is writing within such a relative, fluctuating jumble of identities.

Seyhan states that "tales where personal destinies meet historical forces are often the most powerful guardians of public memory" (Seyhan 1996: 419). In Özdamar's writings history is remembered and rewritten through textual memory. And this history remembered makes it possible for the "others" who live on the edge–in the case of this text the Turks living in Germany–to create their stuck in between identities. According to Seyhan, what Özdamar and numerous authors who live and write in two or more languages from various different cultures do is express the state of "in betweenness" and "hybridity." When we look at Özdamar's "real" life story, we can speak of three different geographies she has lived in and gotten to know: Turkey, East Germany, and West Germany. Naturally, as Özdamar looks at her "past" as a theater actress and writer who has lived in both Berlins accumulating such diverse experiences, she will not be merely a naive child narrator.[15] The story she is trying to recount is not merely a story of growing up. It is an uprising against the arbitrary and simplistic approach to issues of identity and belonging through an "accented" German used by an artist attempting to develop a critical view of the history of the Turkish Republic.

When we are looking at autobiographical texts, we pose questions that we do not ask other literary texts. One of these is whether the first person narrator is the same person who has lived the events. We assume that the writing I is the future of the narrated I. But in the context of the narrative techniques, what counts is the relation between the two. Whether the author Emine Sevgi and the "little" narrator we follow through her

14 Seyhan 2001, in reference to the title of the book, *Writing Outside the Nation*.
15 Jankowsky 1997 puts a special emphasis on this.

eighteen years are the same persons is actually not that important. What is worth exploring is how Özdamar[16] creates the basic dynamic of the autobiographical narrative by interweaving a multi-languaged approach in which the narrative techniques, languages, and images melt into one another, and the stance of that always-on-the-edge child narrator conscious enough to be aware that language cannot be monovoiced enough to say "onun Ana gı'sı ile benim Anacuğum, yan yana İstanbul'un Anneciğim'ine karşı durdular."[17] The content has determined the structure as well.

The novel ends with the train journey the narrator takes to Germany.[18] Was the narrator of the book on her way to Berlin aware that in fifteen years she would write a book and win the Ingeborg Bachmann prize?

16 May 2003, 13:00: I finish the speech with the last question and look at my watch. If I want to catch the afternoon session and get a bite to eat, I must rush out of the house. I don't get the opportunity to go over my presentation and as is customary at times like this, mishaps follow one after the other; I am not able to get a print out neither at home nor at the office. Trying not to panic, I print my speech at a copy shop and go to Kennedy Lodge where all the participants are having lunch. No way can I eat anything under that stress, but I try. Constantly the same voice in my head, "What are you going to do with such a last minute paper?" Also I am very nervous about having included stories of myself in the paper. I am worried it might be too informal. The other presentations we

16 As Özdamar says, "I was accepted, but merely as a guest-writer." Quoted in Jankowsky 1997: 261.

17 "Dayımın elini, dilimin altına bu şehrin şivesini yerleştirdiğim ağzımla öptüm. Tren İstanbul'a vardı. ... Annem karşımda duruyordu, ama onu kucaklayamıyordum. Aramızda, dilimin altında bu Anadolu şehrinden getirdiğim yabancı şivenin ördüğü bir duvar vardı. Annem 'Böyle konuşma, yine İstanbul Türkçesiyle, temiz Türkçeyle konuşmalısın, anlıyor musun?' ... ben 'Anacuğum' dedim annem 'Anneciğim' dedi. ... Ninem geldi, 'Anacuğum' ile 'Anneciğim' arasındaki kapışmayı gördü: 'İstanbul'un kelimeleri, dilde güzel bir tat bırakmıyor, tıpkı çürük dallar gibi ardarda kırılıyorlar' dedi. Annem 'Nasıl anacuğum dediğini duymuyor musun?' dedi. Ninem 'Evet Ana gı diyor' dedi. Ana gı, onun Kapadokya'daki köyünün şivesinde 'Anne' demekti. Onun ana gı'sı ile benim Anacuğum, yan yana İstanbul'un Anneciğim'ine karşı durdular" (Özdamar 1993: 35).
"I kissed my uncle's hand with my mouth, under my tongue I had fastened this city's dialect, these people's strange song of life. The train got to Istanbul. … My mother stood facing me, but I couldn't put my arms around her. Between us stood a wall made of the strange dialect I had brought back under my tongue from the Anatolian city. My mother said, 'Don't talk like that, you have to speak Istanbul Turkish, clean Turkish again, understand?' … I said 'anacuğum.' Mother said, 'anneciğim.' … My grandmother came, saw the sparring between 'anacuğum' and 'anneciğim,' said 'Istanbul words don't leave a sweet taste on the tongue, the words are like diseased branches, they break one after the other.' My mother said, 'Can't you hear the way she says Anacuğum?' Grandmother said, 'Yes, she is saying Anagı' which in her Kapadokia village dialect also meant mother. Her Anagı and my anacuğum stood side by side across from the Istanbul Anneciğim" (Özdamar 2000: 35-36).

18 The author's second novel, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (1998), begins where the first book ends. A young woman going to Germany to work in a factory has now replaced the child and adolescent narrator of the first book.

listen to are so meticulously constructed and serious, I feel myself diminishing inch by inch. At the coffee break before the session I am supposed to deliver my speech, I am about to die of nausea and excitement. I, who am so calm normally, am not even sure whether I'll be able to hold this speech or not. I don't know whether it is because Orhan Pamuk is holding a speech at 18:00, but the auditorium is packed. I say to myself, "I wish we hadn't invited anyone." What I feel in all sincerity is "This is it Olcay. This is the end of your academic life. Nothing will follow..."

16 May 2003, 15:45: The session begins. Catharina Dufft, I apologize to you, but I was so tense I could not really listen to your speech. At the same time, I am reading my own presentation at least to familiarize myself with it and I add one final sentence in handwriting. Another question, following the questions concluding my speech, making the situation even more absurd: And who can guarantee that I have not invented all these?

I feel more at ease with this sentence. And yes, now it's my turn. I don't recall much after reading the first sentence but I got a really good vibe from the room and I realize once I ask the last question and finish my speech that I have done something autobiographical by writing my process of reading, and this speech recounting itself has pleased the audience.

A day in the summer of 2005: Trying to put the final point on this article attempt, I've kept sheltered for months, years, now I know that my actual concern was not to "write" this article but to tell its story. Are you still asking how this presentation turned into this piece? I gave up trying to "write" something and "told" it to you instead.

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Theoretical Dimensions

Autobiography and "Islam"

Susanne Enderwitz

When I planned this paper, I had in mind to systematize and comment upon all the negative notions of Western or Western inspired Arab and Islamic Studies concerning Arab autobiography. These notions could be grouped together, as I thought, under the label of "Islam"–in the sense of: "Islam has no use for the introspection of the self which is at the basis of Christian autobiography." But this turned out to be misleading, as long as Islam is perceived in the narrow sense of the word, i.e., the religion of Islam. Many of the (sometimes disparaging) remarks cover not only the Arab-Muslim culture of the Middle Ages, but also Arab-Muslim and Islam-based societies in modern times and Arab "mentality" in an ethnical (ahistorical, essentialist) sense; sometimes, these notions are separated from each other, sometimes they overlap, and sometimes they are mixed together. Therefore, in what follows I will put the term Islam in quotation marks.

Starting with Franz Rosenthal, Georg Misch, and Gustav von Grunebaum, one can say that the protagonists of Western Arab and Islamic Studies for decades looked down on Arab and Muslim autobiography in general and on classical autobiography in particular. Even al-Ghazali's "al-Munqidh min al-dalal" (Saviour from Error), this outstanding example of medieval prose, counted little in comparison with Augustine's *Confessions*. Rosenthal's famous remark from 1937 in his "Die arabische Autobiographie" (Arab Autobiography) stated: "Looking back from Ghazzali to Augustine's autobiography with its abundance of personal details, which are joyfully perceived and realized by the author, the most personal autobiography of Islam shows itself in a rather pale light." As Augustine is undisputedly Christian, but not downright Western (in fact, a couple of years ago a conference on "the great Algerian philosopher," Augustine, took place in Algiers), Rosenthal seems to have a religious and not so much an ethnic difference in mind. However, true to the title of his article, his arguments run exclusively along the line of "Arab" and not of "Muslim." Implicitly he comes to the conclusion that Arabs had neither the capacity nor the need or use for autobiography. Explicitly he states the following: Concerning author and reader, Arabs give preference to the amazing detail over the complete portrayal of a person or personality. With regard to society, Arab society gives preference to the collective over the individual. And with regard to self-portrayal itself, Arabs give preference to a brief enumeration of facts over a lengthy and subjective self-interpretation. In classical Arabic literature, we learn from Rosenthal, first-person narrative only rarely goes beyond a curriculum vitae.

Although the answers of the literary historians with regard to autobiography (whether Arab, Muslim, or Arab-Muslim) differed, their questions always remained the same:

1. What are the motives behind the writing of an Arab-Muslim autobiography? Is it a) a dedication to God, a grateful listing of God's bounty, b) the belief in the exemplarity of one's life, which may be a helpful guide for others, or c) the offering of a set of information, which can be of use for the various historical sciences?
2. What is the relationship between the individual author and the values of his society? Is it a) a sense of shame and honor, as the notion of individual guilt is not backed by religion, b) the wish to prove oneself in conformity with a society which rejects non-conformism as dangerous, or c) a willful identification with a group of people, with whom the author shares some (mainly professional) characteristics?
3. What is the result of the endeavor of writing an autobiography? Is it a) an enumeration of one's achievements (as Islam has no tradition of confessions), b) the presentation of a life in public, disregarding its more private or family details, or c) the account of different situations in life, which does not show a coherent (and therefore (re)constructed or even "fictional") development of the personality?

One can multiply these nine sub-questions, formulate them in either more religious or social terms, and put them together in various configurations, but the main questions concerning the value of the individual, the role of religion/society, and the results in the autobiographical genre are always the same. Moreover, these questions are borrowed from the European discussion of autobiography, its historical and theoretical aspects, which gained momentum in the course of the twentieth century, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. This discussion, however, without disregarding the ancient roots of autobiography and its after-life in post-modern times, focused on the emergence of bourgeois society as the heyday of European autobiography with its explicit individualism, its rebellion against society, and its self-creational aspects. As the exclusion and inclusion of texts depend on the definition of literary genres, a definition of autobiography, which regards bourgeois autobiography as the prototype or main model of the genre in question, tends to disregard autobiographies from non-bourgeois societies. All of you know the definition of Philippe Lejeune, himself a specialist in eighteenth century France, for whom autobiography is a "retrospective prose story that a real person relates about his own existence, in which he gives emphasis to his individual life, and to the history of his personality in particular" (Lejeune 1975: 14).

From this point of view, some researchers completely denied the possibility of an Arab or Muslim autobiography, either in classical or modern times. Marvin

Zonis for instance argued not long ago that for people in the Middle East history, and secular history as well, is always conceived as sacred history in either religious or nationalist terms, that they lack an indirect or historicist perspective, and that therefore their accounts of history (including biography and autobiography) comes closer to hagiography than to history proper. In his words: "Historicism is the commitment to an understanding of a phenomenon as rooted in particular contexts that change over time with the result that the phenomenon itself may change. That commitment is not yet thoroughly subsumed within the culture of the Middle East. It is no wonder, then, that autobiography and biography are not yet part of the genres of literature in the Middle East" (Zonis 1991: 60-88, 61).

Others, even those who deliberately distanced themselves from "Orientalism" as a Eurocentric essentialism, were thinking along the same lines. Edward Said, himself autobiographer, wrote: "Autobiography as a genre scarcely exists in Arabic literature. When it is to be found, the result is wholly special." Stephen Humphreys, a historian of the Middle East, refers to autobiography as "a very rare genre in Islamic literature." And Albert Hourani wrote of Rashid Rida, the early twentieth century Egyptian reformer: "He has left us something which is rare in Arabic, a fragment of autobiography which in fact is a history of his intellectual and spiritual formation during the first thirty years or so of his life."[1]

The underlying assumption of these and similar statements is that the Arabs/Muslims did not develop the genre of autobiography because they did not develop a sense for individual autonomy. Curiously enough, there are statements precisely to the contrary, as early as in nineteenth century European scholarship, with the only difference being that they concern biography and not autobiography. Starting with the observation that "(I)n many Muslim minds, history... became almost synonymous with biography" (Rosenthal 1968: 89), scholars suggested a pronounced individualism underlying this fact. For instance, the German historian Jacob Burckhardt stated: "In the Middle Ages... Man was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation–only through some general category... In Italy, this veil first melted into air... (M)an became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such. In the same way the Greek had once distinguished himself from the barbarian, and the Arabian had felt himself an individual at a time when other Asiatics knew themselves only as members of a race."[2] Likewise, S.D. Goitein discerned in Arab biographical literature an individual spirit he had not expected: "First and foremost, I was impressed by the endless number of individuals whose personality is clearly brought out, in one way or another, by those ancient Arabic narratives. In the case of prominent actors on the scene, this is being done in monographs, com-

1 Quoted in Reynolds 2001 (ed.): 26.
2 Quoted in Reynolds 2001 (ed.): 23.

posed of consecutive accounts, complemented by longer or shorter disconnected anecdotes, and concluded, usually subsequent to the story of his death, by a formal description of his character, illustrated again by the narration of relevant deeds, dicta, or incidents."[3]

Today, there is a third position between a fastidious depreciation of Arab-Muslim autobiography and an unbiased appreciation of Arab-Muslim biography. A recent publication edited by Dwight F. Reynolds et al., *Interpreting the Self. Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, which is concerned with pre-modern Arab-Muslim autobiography, candidly cut down the euphoric praise of restless individualism, confessional mood, and exposure of the inner self in Western definitions of autobiography. The new definition of autobiography now reads: "The guiding criterion in this study for deeming a text an autobiography has been that the text present itself as a description or summation of the author's life, or a major portion thereof, as viewed retrospectively from a particular point in time" (Reynolds 2001 (ed.): 9). The difference between this definition and that of Philippe Lejeune lies mainly in the fact that terms like "person," "individual," and "personality" have been completely omitted.

The new version of the definition of autobiography enabled the authors to increase the amount of pre-modern autobiographies reasonably without adding to the number of known manuscripts. Where Rosenthal had mentioned 23 texts, Shauqi Daif 26, and Saleh al-Ghamdi 27, to name but a few authors, the group around Reynolds was now able to consider at least 140 candidates in pre-modern Arab-Muslim literature. The authors moreover challenge three basic assumptions of previous research concerning the personal contribution in these texts:

1. They state that Arab-Muslim culture bears no obstacle for the writing of a personal autobiography, nor does it demand it: "Literary convention seems neither to have encouraged nor to have hindered such expression" (Reynolds 2001 [ed.]: 242).
2. However, they concede an empirical lack of accounts of a more personal nature, without presenting a short-handed explanation: "In at least one period... a sense of 'autobiographical anxiety' emerged that motivated authors to pen elaborate defenses of autobiographical writing. The larger sociopolitical reasons for this anxiety have yet to be fully explored" (Reynolds 2001 [ed.]: 242-243).
3. Nevertheless, they decide to interpret the lack of more personal details in biographical and autobiographical writing in positive instead of negative terms: "(T)abaqat do not *fail* to take account of individuality; rather they *succeed* in excluding it" (Reynolds 2001 [ed.]: 41).

3 Quoted in Reynolds 2001 (ed.): 30.

To me, it seems a reasonable approach, in literary as well as in economic, political, and social history, to refrain as much as possible from the postulate that the European example of the eighteenth to the twentieth century, a world-wide exception with, however, world-wide influence, should serve as the general horizon. Is this European example, where the emergence of a "private" sphere in the eighteenth century entailed a genre that turned the private into the most public issue, really a tape-measure for the general development of the genre? Do psychological or sexual confessions, seen from a non-European perspective, show more of an individual than intellectual or spiritual experience? Or do they not find their appropriate place in other literary genres, like *adab*, manuals, anecdotes, or the like?

All this said, the fact remains that most of us are Western or Western educated scholars who cannot deny their basic concern with the "I" and the "me" or "self," with the relationship between the "individual" and its society, and with the resulting "self-representation" in autobiography. The emergence of the self as an explicit subject in biographies and autobiographies has undoubtedly been an important element of European social thought since the eighteenth century. Indeed, the idea of the self, a conscious and self-reflexive "me" or "I" possessing individuality and an "inner" life, is so integral to modern Western thought that it is considered a natural part of the social landscape (Eickelman 1991: 35-59, 39).

This becomes particularly evident, when Reynolds and his colleagues on the one hand present the question of the "I" in Arab-Muslim autobiography differently from their predecessors, but on the other hand consider its unearthing as an especially challenging and promising issue. On that account they recommend a closer study of hitherto neglected sub-genres in Arab autobiography, especially inserted anecdotes, poetry, or dreams, in order to find hints for a more personal–though concealed–self-presentation than in the autobiographical text proper. The procedure is not completely new, at least not in theory as Hilary Kilpatrick, Widad al-Qadi, and Hartmut Fähndrich years ago suggested that Arab-Muslim historical, biographical, and autobiographical texts were by a closer reading likely to reveal considerably more about their author's or protagonists' personal and "inner" lives than has been previously documented.

With the help of Marcel Mauss' seminal article on the emergence of the "person," Dale F. Eickelman made another useful distinction, for his part not with the duality of "text" and "insertion," but that of "person" and "individual" in mind. I quote him in full: "'Individual' refers to the mortal human being, the object of observation and self-reflection. Thus individuals can wield considerable power and still not be recognized as playing a significant or legitimate social role. "Person" refers to the cultural concepts that lend social significance to the individual. Personhood can be regarded as a status that varies according to social criteria which contain the capacities of the individual within defined roles and categories. The notion of person... is society's confirmation that an individual's

identity has social significance" (Eickelman 1991: 37). In his study of traditional life-accounts of Moroccan and Omani religious scholars in the twentieth century, where individuality in the Western sense plays no role at all, Eickelman successfully detects a gradual adaptation of the required traits of a scholar to individual needs.

When another ethnographer, Lawrence Rosen, in a study of Moroccan society used the expression "so personalistic a universe" (Rosen 1990: 14), he equally stressed the importance of the person in Arab-Muslim society. Starting with the Prophetic Tradition: "God loves those who hide their sins," he went on to explain, "not because sinning is good but because social repercussions that risk civil strife are greatly to be feared and anything that does not, in this sense, come into the world is strictly between God and the individual." From the dichotomy of a person's overt acts and its concealed self, he concluded, a Westerner could easily misinterpret the stress on the individual as something familiar to himself. "We can see an emphasis on the individual and mistakenly equate it with the western notion of individual*ism*, of a self-directed and self-fashioning person whose inner, psychic structure generates a self that is, whatever its overt manifestations, deeply and truly private" (Rosen 1990: 53). But far from it; a Moroccan individual, in Rosen's understanding, is not a stable entity, but changes with every situation: "A style exists that pervades much of Arab culture, one in which the individual unit is seen to exist within an overarching framework that is itself open-ended and unfinished... Words and concepts that frame relationships do not govern those relationships; they are a form of malleable framework by means of which negotiated, individual networks may be formed. The individual unit—of art, science, or society—is thus a momentary vessel for the features that have no other life than in their concrete embodiment" (Rosen 1990: 54).

I am not sure whether or not these remarks should be dismissed as "essentialist." Rosen himself claims to have distilled them out of his field-work, from empirical material, from everyday experience, not from general judgments about the "nature" of the Arabs. In any case, these remarks bring us back to our initial discussion of Arab-Muslim autobiography. In the beginning of my paper I presented the usual Western argument that Arabs have no such genre as autobiography, as they have no modern sense of individuality. Post-modernism, however, teaches us that notions such as an "I" as a self-contained entity with a self-assured identity capable of reflexive self-expression are deceptive or misleading. As Robert Smith in a study on Jacques Derrida puts it: "The autobiographical subject philosophically does not differ from other kinds of subject, and each one is a 'discursive effect,' fashioned as the grille through which various discrete institutional discourses radiate their power" (Smith 1995: 64).

Rosen's comment on Moroccan society might be read in this context. We have, in a sense, a deconstruction of the "I" as a "discursive effect." Only it goes into the opposite direction: not "they are like us" but "we are like them." Seen in

this light, Arab–and especially classical Arab–autobiography with its stress on the person instead of an inner self, on situations instead of a coherent life-story, and on social instead of private (not to speak of intimate) relations comes much closer to postmodern views of "selfhood" than traditional Western autobiographies do.

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Lejeune and Foucault or: A name with no identity

Özkan Ezli

The term "autobiography" is a neologism of the eighteenth century in Europe and obviously preceded related terms like "confessions" or "memoirs." Even if Georg Misch is correct in defining autobiography etymologically as "the description (graphia) of life (bios) of one person by him- or herself (auto),"[1] the concept of autobiography emerged much later than its Greek origin suggests. It first appeared in England and Germany without any discernible connection, whereas in France it became known much later. The phenomenon of the autobiography is to this day temporally and territorially understood as a native phenomenon of European Enlightenment.[2]

If this is the case then, the word "native" is not quite the right word because since its first appearance, the concept of autobiography has been following different and sometimes even mutually contradicting ways, both in its praxis and its self-referential theoretical endeavors. Being that it was first a pietistic literature of confession, the confessing subject then entered into a dialogue with God. In the autobiographical writings of Rousseau and Goethe we find the subject integrated on two levels: the level of authenticity and uniqueness on the one hand and the level of fiction and the reflection of the world within the self (see Müller 1976). At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was Dilthey who brought the concepts of autobiography and the philosophy of history together. Although Dilthey does call the autobiography a singular entity of meaning, it still represents for him, like Leibniz's monade, "... the historical universe."[3] In the 1950s and 1960s, Gusdorf and Roy Pascal drew the theoretical borders of the autobiography by implementing the terms "sincerity" and "work of art." All the models of autobiography I have mentioned so far have that they deal with relations of a reference outside the autobiographical text itself in common. From the subject's perspective, the links between the text and the extra-textual references range from the divine order of things, poetry and history, to the work of art.

The 1970s witnessed another one of these linking strategies. In his essay "The Autobiographical Pact," published in 1974, Philippe Lejeune tried to establish an overt differentiation between autobiographies and autobiographical novels. His both extremely reductionist and straightforward suggestion is to corroborate the

1 Misch 1991: 38 (translations are mine).

2 This conception ranges from Georg Misch 1907, Georges Gusdorf 1956, and Philippe Lejeune 1975 to Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, who claims the memory of the autobiography to be European even if it is increasingly being interculturally overwritten.

3 Dilthey 1991: 28 (translations are mine).

identity of author, narrator, and protagonist, thus trying to guarantee the reader the non-fictional status of the autobiography.

Lejeune's answer to the question of how, i.e., by what indication or function, does an autobiographical text claim an extra-textual reference is the proper name. In so doing, he compares speech with writing. In a text, each grammatical person (I, you, he/she) could be fiction, while in speech the authentic reference is ensured by the concurrence of speaker and expression. At that point, Lejeune tries to avoid the inherent uncertainty of the written word.

In Lejeune's theory, the author is an important authority in that he constructs the elements of an autobiographical pact with the reader. Lejeune asserts that the autobiography involves some kind of a pact with the reader which is sealed by the author's signature. With his or her signature, the signatory guarantees both the referentiality of the contents and the identity of signatory and author. The signature is the fulcrum of the author's identity since its appearance testifies the "identity of the name," binding the author to the text that bears his or her name. According to Lejeune, this is also true of pseudonymous texts because the pseudonym is nothing but a name of an author. It doesn't matter whether the name used is a proper name designating an existing (or once existing) person or any other name designating a person to whom the text or texts in question can, for whatever reason, be attributed. Authorship is in any case the "common factor" which links a body of texts and in linking them surpasses them (see Lejeune 1994: 24-28).

From Lejeune's point of view, the proper name's referential function is not to be called into doubt since it relies on two societal institutions: the official liability of the name (a convention being internalized already in early childhood) and the publisher's contract. In emphasizing the autobiographical pact between author and reader, which is sealed among author, narrator, and character, Lejeune's definition is a pragmatic, formalistic, and somehow bureaucratic one. In addition to that pragmatic and formalistic attempt to define autobiography, Lejeune also emphatically stresses in the beginning of his theory that an autobiography is "the retrospective work of prose of a real person about their own existence, if they put emphasis on their personal life and especially on the history of their personality."[4]

Two dissimilar languages emerge in his theory at the same time. Firstly, there is a rather general definition of autobiography, its real starting point being the identity of the author with his/her text. Here, it is sufficient if the author intentionally refers to the fact that the text at issue is a written account of his/her personal history. That sort of definition, known since Rousseau's confessions, rejects twentieth century developments in literature, the philosophy of language and sociology all at once.

4 Quoted in Enderwitz 1998: 6.

Secondly, he makes use of a partly structuralistic argumentation by drawing on Emile Benveniste and Gerard Genette in order to point to the importance of the proper name on the textual level. He only allows as much complexity in his text as the proper name can take. Take for instance Sartre's statement of there being a demonic polyphony in his autobiography *Les Mots* as an example of the possible threat to the identity and unity of the proper name, which Lejeune tries to come up against with the thought that it is exactly the proper name which has the capacity to integrate that polyphony.

> Person and speech connect each other in the proper name even before they mutually connect in the first person.[5]

"What difference does it make who is speaking?" asked Samuel Beckett. This question is the provocative starting point in Michel Foucault's lecture "What is an author?" (1969), in which he challenges the term of the author. And he adds to Beckett's notion an irritating but, in the context of his work, fundamental assertion:

> First of all, we can say that today's writing has freed itself from the dimension of expression.[6]

All of Foucault's major works, from *Mental Illness and Psychology* (1954) and *Madness and Civilization* (1960) to *The Order of Things* (1966) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975) are marked by a criticism of fixed identities. From his analysis of the process of psychologizing "the mad," their exclusion from society and their detention in psychiatric institutions, to modern man, who begins to exist with the disciplination of society of the nineteenth century, Foucault challenges not only the phenomenon of history but also some of the key terms of Enlightenment, such as reason, freedom, meaning as semantic, and the authenticity of the subject.

According to Foucault, the psychological subject is an invention of the nineteenth century. Man as we know him today is not a product of a linear history of development. Foucault sees him as defined by various social codes, such as disciplination (prison, military, schools), efficiency and introspection, all of which appear increasingly in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. The phenomenon of introspection is particularily fundamental to the field of literature. It was the novelists and theorists Karl Philipp Moritz and Jean-Jaques Rousseau who, in their works, created a literature of pure subjectivity with its own developing history. What does one's own life mean? In this context, prose in particular becomes a popular form for the promotion of the self, mainly due to its successive and accumulative character. In this context it is interesting to note that Lejeune's approach seems deeply rooted in the nineteenth century as for him there

5 Ibid.: 29.
6 Foucault 1979: 142.

exists only one possible form of autobiography, namely prose. According to Foucault, the promotion of the self in a literary way at the beginning of the nineteenth century is an attempt to describe one's own life as disciplined and efficient. With these codes and their manifestation in writing, the idea of the modern self comes into existence. However, the development of modern man is not a straight path from immaturity to maturity, but rather the constitution of a self-observing and controlling subject. The Enlightenment not only invented freedom, but also discipline.

The term "expression," which Foucault discharges in his lecture, combines several phenomenons of the Enlightenment, in particular the authencity of a person through his or her articulation and the words' meaning. The term's *a priori* character is mainly based on the phenomenon of a united subjectivity and intentionality. At this point, we once more come across Lejeune, whose introductory hypothesis in "The Autobiograhical Pact" sees an author's expression as evidence of the authencity of his or her autobiography. Lejeune's concept of the identity of author and text is based on the assertion that the author describes only his own life and nothing else.

In Foucault's theory concepts, which are centered upon the term of "discoursivity," every speaking or writing subject moves within the limits of a certain discourse. For Foucault, "discourse" means a system of statements that not only marks the field in which we can speak, but also assigns the positions to the speakers. In other words, every autobiography or any other text always resonates of more than just one individual voice. As Walter Benjamin said, any text, be it autobiography or not, always transmits more historical or social codes than the individual opinion of one single author suggests. In every autobiography, there are various subject-positions or, as Paul de Man would say, figurations (De Man 1993: 131-146). Thus, the crucial question for Foucault does not concern identity between text and author. In contrast to Lejeune, he is interested rather in how the identity between author and text is generated in the first place. In this sense, Foucault does not understand identity as a clear or evident concept. Instead, it is a complicated process of description.

> An author's name is not simply an element in a discourse ...; it performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts.[7]

Here the name of the author is not the limit of the text, but sets the limit. The creation of identity is setting a limit. According to Foucault, the text is embedded in a discourse which ascribes to the name of the author the function to differentiate texts from each other, but no substance to constitute an original limit.

7 Foucault 1979: 149.

For Lejeune, however, there is no doubt in this case. If the author's name appears on the cover of the book, the name is definitely the limit of the text. In this sense, the name of the author (for Lejeune this means in particular the proper name) sets the standard for the whole text. Lejeune would probably agree with the functional character of the author's name, as there are numerous structuralistic elements in "The Autobiographical Pact." But Lejeune does not follow this approach through to its logical conclusion, and he reverses his argumentation when he introduces the proper name as the irreducible sign of subjectivity that should shield his definition of autobiography from the polyphony of the subject-positions of the discourse. He equates the proper name with identity.

> There are as many proper names as there are individuals.[8]

The limit is the proper name, or the individual, which for Lejeune represents the extra-textual reference.

> The underlying theme of autobiography is the proper name.[9]

However, in the discourse there are neither depths nor surfaces. It is the discourse itself which defines the depths and surfaces. It also defines what an autobiography is and what it is not. Foucault seeks to explore what happens with a text or an autobiography if we consider the author, the narrator, and the protagonist.

> Doing so means overturning the traditional problem, no longer raising the questions "How can a free subject penetrate the substance of things and give it meaning? How can it activate the rules of a language from within and thus give rise to the designs which are properly its own?" Instead, these questions will be raised: "How, under what conditions and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules?" In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse.[10]

Discourse can be interpreted as a cultural frame, which can nevertheless encompass various types of discourses at the same time. For example, in Turkish autobiographies of the twentieth century, issues such as the Europeanization or Westernization of one's own culture are of the same importance as the individual history of the authors. This also applies to Palestinian autobiographies, whose historical discourses are, logically, constituted in a different way. It would thus be very interesting to explore whether (and in what ways) the various discourses, such as history, nation, individuality, family, and geography, communicate with each other. If autobiographies were analyzed in this regard rather than with respect to the author´s persona, there would be more connections to social-historical movements in a definite cultural frame.

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8 Lejeune 2001: 132.
9 Ibid.: 135.
10 Foucault 1979: 157.

Lejeune's theory of autobiography hinders such an opening of the text. His mode of interpretation focusses rather on a hermeneutical understanding of the text in direct relation to its author. Also, in this context, Lejeune understands autobiography as a genuine European phenomenon. His theory doesn't problemize autobiography and disregards further possibilities of what autobiography could be. Lejeune is mostly interested in defining and assuring a specific genre which needs a strong undeniable "I" (or subject). Thus, Lejeune asks:

> Who wrote the text? At which time? Under which circumstances and for what reason?

The autobiographical Subject doesn't seem to arise through the text itself but in the interplay of question and answer.

Foucault's question on the other hand opens a greater historical and sociopolitical dimension which can be made useful in the analysis and consideration of non-European autobiographies.

> We would no longer hear the questions that have been rehashed for so long: "Who really spoke? Is it really he and not someone else? With what authencity or originality? And what part of his deepest self did he express in his discourse?" Instead, there would be other questions, like these: "What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject-functions?" And behind all these questions, we would hear hardly anything but the stirring of an indifference: "What difference does it make who is speaking?"[11]

If Lejeune created the dramatic formula of autobiographical truth linked to a writer's proper name, Foucault argues dramatically against it: there will be more things if there will be no names.

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Sentenced to Life: Autobiography and Aging

Herrad Heselhaus

Reading about autobiography, one quickly gets the impression that everything has been thoroughly analyzed already: the "auto" has been torn to pieces, the "graphy" pulled apart, both reflecting the suspiciousness of literary critics such as Derrida, Lejeune, or De Man, and the self-awareness of modern Western writing. Curiously enough, the "bio" didn't get that much attention, which may be due to the dominance of post-structuralist discourses and the uneasiness they display when confronted with the Lacanian "Real." Of course, the question of gender has been raised and the post-colonial impact is at stake. Two approaches that are ever more often chosen, when "life" itself is in question. However, another central characteristic feature of life, and the one that is situated at the core of autobiographical writing itself, has so far hardly ever been the focus of critical analysis: it is the process of aging.

There is no life without aging—at least as far as human beings are concerned—and there is no autobiography without the temporal organization of life. There may be a few autobiographical works that can do without the description of a long period of lifetime, centering instead on a certain, most prominent moment, and endowing this single moment with all the meaning of life. But even then, for the story to fully unfold, the meaning of that particular moment, an account of the time that leads up to that moment, is needed to have a historical background that illuminates the moment in question. However short this account may be (a few words may suffice), it is absolutely vital to the understanding of that central moment in terms of autobiographical information. But take another example: Even if you choose a young protagonist as the hero of your autobiographical writing, you cannot avoid the aging process. Childhood and adolescent life need to be covered, as in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* or J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, and however short these periods may seem in a full life span, their prominent feature is exactly the process of aging, in its early stage of growing up. Childhood and adolescence are in the firm grip of the constructions of time and their institutions of *Bildung*. Kindergarten, school, youth organizations, apprenticeship, and university are all organized in a framework of age and a hierarchy of senior and junior. Contrary to expectations, most autobiographies of adolescence are not written by as youthful a writer as the protagonist may suggest. Elisabeth Ravoux-Rallo has shown in a brilliant analysis of twentieth century adolescent autobiographical writing that there is usually an enormous age gap between the young hero and his old writer, a fatal gap that turns what seems to be an authentic first-hand account into a nostalgic vision or even revision of a past long gone by (Ravoux-Rallo 1989). As we can see, even these autobiographies of youth are dominated by the process of aging.

So far we have been dealing with all kinds of autobiographical writings indiscriminately. There is of course a wide variety of textual organization patterns. There are the different genres such as memoirs, confessions, journals, and diaries.[1] There are the fictitious versions of novels that suggest to their readers some kind of autobiographical dimension, like the relatedness of the story and the author's life well known to the public, or the use of the first-person narrative.[2] There are of course also what you may term pure autobiographies and pure biographies, the difference between which is much more than just the first-person perspective. The reader's response toward autobiographies is organized by Lejeune's famous "autobiographical pact" (see Lejeune 1991): he or she takes the identity of the text's pronoun "I" with the author's name for granted, which then leads the reader to a certain assessment of the story told. There is a high amount of distrust, because however much the reader is willing to believe what is told, he will most naturally have doubts about the author's aim of giving a really truthful picture of himself. This is as much due to the tradition of autobiographical writing stemming from the obviously well-motivated genre of confession as it is due to everyday common sense.

On the other hand, we may well assume something similar concerning biographies: The "biographical pact" clearly differentiates between the text's subject and the text's author. However, as much as this may result in a belief in the exactness of information on the part of the reader, he or she in fact shares the author's fascination for the text's subject. What may seem as an objective third-person account at first sight, turns then into a very subjective, even raving embellishment of the (usually famous) person the text is about. A pact of willing suspense of disbelief–which, too, is staged between the author and the reader. Of course authors have abused the power of these pacts. The most famous example is Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which, while calling itself an autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, pretends to be a biography of Gertrude Stein through the eyes of her friend Toklas, but is in fact an autobiography of Gertrude Stein and a biography about her friend Alice B. Toklas. This fascinating creation of Stein does not only blur the lines between biography and autobiography but also offers a detailed critical analysis of the pacts at stake.

These genres are all very different in kind;[3] however, they all share the process of aging as their fundamental organizing structure. How vital a feature of the "autobiographical" the fragmentation of a lifetime into periods of experience is, can be shown by a fake biography, which makes use of exactly this element in

1 For a detailed analysis, see Wagner-Egelhaaf 2000.

2 Barbara Frey Waxman has made use of this blurring of lines of genre in her analysis of autobiographies of aging, dealing mainly with fictitious accounts and novels. See Waxman 1997.

3 Barbara Johnson and Mary Jacobus both understand autobiography as a monstrous or transgressive genre. See Johnson 1989 and Jacobus 1989.

order to create its camouflage. Wolfgang Hildesheimer has written two fake biographies. One is on Mozart, in which Mozart of course is the historical person, but his biographer, who in that text shares so much detailed information with the famous musician, is a mere invention. Hildesheimer takes great pains to create through the abundant use of data on time, location, and correspondence the effect of a real biography. In his short text *1956 – ein Pilzjahr*, Hildesheimer writes another fictitious biography, a eulogy in commemoration of Gottlieb Theodor Pilz. This time it is a satire, which exposes the construction of the biographic effect and not only makes fun of the genre, but also of a society that relishes the documentation of human ingenuity. In *1956 – ein Pilzjahr*, Hildesheimer again uses precise data to give an account of Pilz's life from birth to death. But this time the given data does not reflect the ingenuity and productivity of the biography's protagonist, but rather shows his mediocrity and failure of success. Pilz's most outstanding quality is not to work and to keep others from working:

> Seine Bedeutung wird heute weit unterschätzt. Das ist nicht verwunderlich. Denn er war weniger ein Schöpfer als ein Dämpfer. Sein Beitrag zur Geschichte der abendländischen Kultur kommt in der Nichtexistenz von Werken zum Ausdruck, Werken, die durch sein mutiges, opferbereites Dazwischentreten niemals entstanden sind. Es ist demnach kein Wunder, daß die Nachwelt, die ja gewohnt ist, die großen Geister nach ihrem Schaffen und nicht nach ihrer Unterlassung zu werten, seiner selten, wenn überhaupt je gedenkt (Hildesheimer 1962: 21).

Hildesheimer's text presents one more element of those that make up the autobiographic effect: there is the definite identification of the first person narrator with the book's author, the abundant use of data and documentation (explicit or implied), the fragmentation of a lifetime into periods of experience (a chronological account or the highlighting of outstanding moments) and the value of the account or the importance of the author. This last point is paramount and should not be underestimated. Autobiographies are written by famous persons, and these persons are usually old. They may be very old, so that they have a lifetime to tell, half a century, three quarters of a century. They may be old in terms of their profession, which accounts for the possibility of an autobiography by a thirty-year old soccer star. Age categorizations of autobiographies depend on the profession in question. If the author is not famous, the subject has to be extraordinary: a remarkable moment in history (a revolution or a coronation), an outstanding deed (military or scientific), an incredible adventure (survival or discovery), a rare experience—such as, for example, very old age or a deadly illness.

How curious that, even though the aging process is at the heart of autobiographical writing, old age is considered as abnormal and rare a phenomenon as a long and vicious disease. Before returning to the main argument that the aging process is a fundamental structure of the autobiographical, we should have a short look at autobiographical writings on old age. This sub-genre of the wide

field of autobiographical writing, in which age is not only the organizing structure but also the main theme, has mushroomed in countries of the West in the last decades, as has the neighboring sub-genre of the description of the experience of long-term serious diseases. A comparison of autobiographical writing on old age with autobiographical writing on long-term illness will help clarify the relationship of both phenomena, and thereby unfold some of the discursive concepts of old age and the politics of ageism that go with them.

In spite of the fact that everybody grows old, *cum grano salis*, while not everybody gets seriously ill, a comparison of old age with fatal disease is not at all surprising. Even at the beginning of the analysis of the phenomenon of aging, theories of illness competed with those of inherent development. There were those theorists who believed in a genetic timetable, that prescribed a certain length of time to any living being, and those who thought of aging as a long-term deterioration of the body comparable in structure to the outbreak of disease, or indeed deeply connected to the overall weakening of an aging body by the accumulation of illnesses through time. Today these gerontological theories have become much more complex:

> Much importance has been placed on the genetic structure of the individual animal or plant species in the various aging theories. It is assumed that aging patterns are present, almost predestined, and that death is a form of planned, programmed self-extinction. […] According to the mutation theory, during the course of aging spontaneous mutations occur in cells, leading to morphological and functional changes. These result in impairment of the cell functions and ultimately affect the whole organism. […] The old "wear and tear" theory is based on the concept that in each organism there is a finite reserve of energy which cannot be replaced. When this reserve is exhausted, degeneration and death ensue (de Nicola 1989: 6-9).

Both autobiographical writing on old age and autobiographical writing on disease share a common history in the Western world. Both are very new subgenres, not even a century old. According to Anne Hunsaker Hawkins, a pioneer in the research on illness narratives, "as a genre, pathography is remarkable in that it seems to have emerged *ex nihilo*; book-length personal accounts of illness are uncommon before 1950 and rarely found before 1900" (Hawkins 1993: 3). This obsession with illness–and the same holds true for old age–may seem strange at first sight, since exactly these years have witnessed an unprecedented boost in medical technology and the celebration of health food, diets, fitness clubs, wellness, and Gray Panther movements. However, G. Thomas Couser sees no contradiction in these parallel developments (Couser 1997). He argues in his book on autopathography that it was exactly this unexpected jump in medicine that triggered off an outbreak of disappointment, once it became clear that nevertheless medicine could neither defeat the major fatal diseases nor do away with the predicaments of old age. The idolization of good health and brisk old age has ousted those who do not fit in: the disabled, the ill, and the senile. Hawkins denounces the witch-hunt that has reprimanded those inflicted. They are consid-

ered responsible for incurring their illness through wrong lifestyle or unbalanced psychological behavior. As far as curable illnesses are concerned, they are also made responsible for their recovery (Hawkins 1993: 129).

Both the ill and the old, it seems, were forced by society to account for their predicament, while at the same time the intense experience of bodily and mental change stimulated a stronger awareness of death and pain and of the breakdown of identity constructs and life plans. But not all who were afflicted set out to write and publish about their new experience. In his analysis of narratives of illness, Couser comes to the interesting conclusion that most of the books on illness in the United States are written by white middle class authors. And that these authors usually had prior writing experience. Again, autobiographical writers on old age also usually have an earlier writing record. But it is not only a question of social status. That same tantalizing experience that triggered off the new interest in autobiography of the person concerned may very well hinder its fulfillment: health conditions may become so bad that continuous writing, which is necessary for a full fledged account, becomes impossible. There is a natural limit to writing about one's illness or old age.

Couser is interested in what he names "autopathography," autobiographical writing about long-term illnesses that become more than a passing experience. Long lasting dysfunctions, whether caused by illness or by old age, have to be lived with. Life has to be remodeled according to the new conditions posed, and this will lead to new and different ways of life, and consequently to new and different stories of life.

> More generally, however, life writing about illness and disability promises to illuminate the relations among body, mind, and soul; indeed, it is significant not just because it represents a relatively new category of life stories but also because it promises to foreground somatic experience in a new way by treating the body's form and function (apart from race or gender) as fundamental constituents of identity. The effects of disease on identity and self-perception may be most fundamental and troubling in the case of mental illness. However, some physical ailments may radically undermine a patient's sense of self. […] When illness and disability forground the body in this way, life writing has a new opportunity to explore the ways in which the body mediates identity or personality (Couser: 1997. 12f).

Couser is especially concerned with identity politics. The autopathographies that he reads aim at the destigmatization of illness and disability. They show and denounce the stereotypes and prejudice the old and the ill are exposed to. At the same time, they serve as identification molds, when it comes to those categories of illness that are connected to certain groups, like AIDS, breast cancer, or senility and old age.

But there is another aspect to these attempts at writing about one's own new disabled life. There is a "life text" prior to the autobiographical endeavors of the inflicted person. Part and parcel of the medical and psychological treatment of ill and old patients is a narrative collaboration between the doctor and the patient:

> Diagnosis often relies at least in part on a medical history; the patient offers up testimony that the doctor interprets according to codes and conventions generally unavailable to the patient. In order to be treated, then, patients generally must have their medical history "taken." In diagnosis doctors provide patients with an interpretation of their lives–and act that, regardless of what follows, may at least make sense of a baffling past. Diagnosis leads in turn to prescription, treatment, and prognosis, all of which extend physicians' authority over patients' lives. Thus doctors may both reinterpret patients' pasts and literally pre-script their futures. The process is collaborative but one sided; patients submit their bodies to tests, their life histories to scrutiny, while doctors retain the authority to interpret these data (Couser 1997: 10).

Although from the medical point of view this is very helpful and desirable, from the patient's point of view it means the relinquishing of control over his or her body and life story. Autopathographies serve as platforms for patients to challenge this medical usurpation and to invent and elaborate their own, personal views of how their lives are changing. Elaine Scarry has long pointed out how difficult it is to find an adequate vocabulary of pain and illness (Scarry 1985). Insofar, these autopathographies can be regarded as demanding poetic and inventive projects. Medical history records are restricted to medical discourse only; they leave their patients' feelings, fears, fantasies, and sensations out of account. This opposition towards medical and psychological authority, as well as social stereotyping, can be interpreted in terms of post-colonialism and postmodernity. In post-colonialist theory the subaltern subject is seeking to speak up for him- or herself and to enforce his or her own representation, rather than merely being subjected to the master discourses.

> The post-colonial stance of these stories resides not in the content of what they say about medicine. Rather the new feel of these stories begins in how often medicine and physicians do not enter their stories. Postmodern illness stories are told so that people can place themselves outside "the unifying general view." For people to move their stories outside the professional purview involves a profound assumption of personal responsibility. […] [In] the remission society, the post-colonial ill person takes responsibility for what illness means in his life (Frank 1995: 13).

A typical example for this attempt at reclaiming one's own life[4] is May Sarton's *At Seventy* (Sarton 1984). Despite several setbacks, this is a thoroughly positive account of growing old. Although Sarton is occasionally troubled by her old age, her looks, her bodily shortcomings, and so forth, she tries to create a positive image of herself at the age of seventy. Her success is widely due to her resilient attempts at keeping herself busy: with gardening as a time-consuming hobby and the company of very diverse friends, including those not only younger but those older than herself as well, and thus give her not only the feeling of being old but also of being young. She is also clever enough not to oversee the advantages of old age: she feels much less committed, troubled, and stressed than she did in

4 For identity politics and old age autobiographies, see Waxman 1997.

her younger years and experiences some kind of old-age freedom. But the main reasons why she can give such a positive picture of herself lie in the simple fact that she is not yet too old to really suffer from the diverse inflictions of very old age, and in the genre she has chosen to write in. Sarton is not writing an autobiography or memoir, but a journal with almost daily entries. The journal as genre however underlies very different time structures than the classical autobiography; it deals with the moment, it does not look back, but intensifies the very moment of existence, thus undermining the wearisome experience of an accumulating past, which is rather typical of the genre of the classical autobiography.

Autobiographical writings like the journal or diary differ in their focus on time structure immensely from those texts which are more concerned with recreating the past, and therefore more involved with the dynamics of memory. The everyday entry of a journal calls to mind the very essence of growing old: a constant irreversible change in life. The most basic feature of growing old is its irreversibility. Growth only knows one direction, and there is no possibility of returning to an older, or for that matter, younger phase in life. However, growing old is not a clearly defined and predetermined process. There are many different ways of growing old, and so far it is impossible to predict them. A sixty-year old person may feel, and be objectively defined as younger than a fifty-year old person. Age boundaries are no measuring rod when it comes to growing old. For that very reason, gerontologists try to conduct longevity surveys; to measure the change of growth within a given individual. Of course these surveys are based on long-term observations as well as subjective information and memory capacity and are therefore rather rare and vulnerable to misinterpretation. Yet the close link between the process of growing old and personal development is also reflected in gerontological theorization. Many theories on aging use biographical interpretations and categorizations. Erikson's and Havighurst's are amongst the most prominent and influential. Following their approach, one can easily identify the process of growing old with biography itself. And that also explains why so many biographical and autobiographical texts follow the structure of aging in their account of human life.[5]

Simone de Beauvoir's four-volume autobiography offers an excellent example to explain the organizing structure of aging for the autobiographical. Her critical insight as the gender-concerned, not to say feminist, author of *Le Deuxième Sexe* and her existentialist inquiry into the meaning of old age in *La Vieillesse* make her an ideal autobiographer for our purpose. As a young feminist, she sets out with her autobiographical project by outlining a critical development of a woman's way of *Bildung*. Rejecting the "normal" biography of a young woman,

[5] For more information on gerontology, see Lehr 2000. Gerontology is a most international and cooperative discipline, and therefore it is very easy to get access to almost any text in most languages.

love, marriage and motherhood, which unavoidably leads to dependence on others, especially men, she endeavors on an independent "male" biography and welcomes praise which compares her abilities to those of the male sex, instead of indulging in her female attractiveness.

> By the time she entered adolescence she began to plan for a different kind of womanhood from that of her mother and other women relatives. The changes in the family situation and the changes in her pubescent body coincided and convinced her that her life would be a constant struggle to impose her own standards of perfection and permanence when she became a woman (Ladimer 1999: 98).

Her existentialist philosophy enables her to face her fears of old age, to relentlessly name the agony that dominates most of her years as a grown-up, post-adolescent person. But that same existentialist philosophy is also responsible for her rejection of old age, as will be shown later. Quite contrary to May Sarton's attempt at envisioning alternative concepts, Beauvoir remains in the discursive realm of classical old age, especially in her polarizations of future and past, youth and old age.

> Qui vois je? Vieillir c'est se définir et se réduire. Je me suis débattue contre les étiquettes; mais je n'ai pas pu empêcher les années de m'emprisonner. J'habiterai longtemps ce décor où ma vie s'est déposée; je resterai fidèle aux amitiés anciennes; le stock de mes souvenirs, même s'il s'enrichit un peu, demeurera. J'ai écrit certains livres, pas d'autres. Quelque chose, à ce propos, me déconcerte. J'ai vécu tendue vers l'avenir et, maintenant, je me récapitule, au passé: on dirait que le présent a été escamoté. J'ai pensé pendant des années que mon oeuvre était devant moi, et voilà qu'elle est derrière: à aucun moment elle n'a eu lieu (de Beauvoir 1963: 683).

On the last pages of the third volume of her autobiography, *La Force des Choses*, she meets her sudden awareness of having aged considerably with an outcry of dismay. In 1963, Simone de Beauvoir is only fifty-five years old:

> A ces mutilations, qui sont l'envers de mes chances, il s'en ajoute une autre à laquelle je ne trouve aucune compensation. Ce qui m'est arrivé de plus important, de plus irréparable depuis 1944, c'est que […] j'ai vieilli. Cela signifie beaucoup de choses. Et d'abord que le monde autour de moi a changé: il s'est rapetissé et amenuisé. Je n'oublie plus que la surface de la terre est finie, fini le nombre de ses habitants, des essences végétales, des espèces animales, et aussi celui des tableaux, des livres, des monuments qui s'y sont déposés. Chaque élément s'explique par cet ensemble et ne renvoie qu'à lui: sa richesse aussi est limitée. Jeunes, nous rencontrions souvent, Sartre et moi, des "individualités au-dessus de la nôtre," c'es-à-dire qui résistaient à l'analyse, retenant à nos yeux un peu du merveilleux de l'enfance. Ce noyau de mystère s'est dissous: le pittoresque est mort, les fous ne me semblent plus sacrés, les foules ne m'enivrent plus; la jeunesse, jadis fascinante, je n'y vois plus que le prélude à la maturité. La réalité m'intéresse encore, mais sa présence ne me foudroie plus. Certes la beauté demeure; bien qu'elle ne m'apporte plus de révélation stupéfiante, bien que la plupart de ses secrets soient éventés il arrive encore qu'elle arrête le temps. Souvent aussi je la déteste (de Beauvoir 1963: 681f).

Her personal experience of old age as it is represented in her autobiographical books is reinforced by her scientific analysis of the construction of discourses of

old age in *La Vieillesse*. This second large sociological and cultural study of Beauvoir is in structure quite similar to her first: old age is analyzed not merely as an important aspect but as an essential element of the *conditio humana*–as was gender in *Le Deuxième Sexe*. A general and historical analysis of myths and topoi is followed by a critical collection of the more subjective experience of old age by historical personalities as well as (in a more generalized version) by social groups. *La Vieillesse* can also be considered as a study in identity politics:

> Toute situation humaine peut être envisagée en extériorité–telle qu'elle se présente à autrui–et en intériorité, en tant que le sujet l'assume en la dépassant. Pour autrui, le vieillard est l'objet d'un savoir; pour soi, il a de son état une experience vécue. Dans la première partie de ce livre, j'adopterai le premier point de vue. J'examinerai ce que la biologie, l'anthropologie, l'histoire, la sociologie contemporaine nous enseignent sur la vieillesse. Dans la seconde, je m'efforcerai de décrire la manière don't l'homme âgé intériorise son rapport à son corps, au temps, à autrui. Aucune de ces deux enquêtes ne nous permettra de définir la vieillesse; nous constaterons au contraire qu'elle prend une multiplicité de visages, irréductibles les uns aux autres. Au cours de l'histoire comme aujourd'hui la lutte des classes commande la manière don't un homme est saisi par sa vieillesse; un abîme sépare le vieil esclave et le vieil eupatride, un ancien ouvrier miserablement pensionné et un Onassis. La différenciation des vieillesses individuelles a d'autres causes encore: santé, famille, etc. Mais ce sont deux categories de vieillards, l'une extrêmement vaste, l'autre réduite à une petite minorité, que crée l'opposition des exploiteurs et des exploités. Toute allegation qui prétend concerner la vieillesse en général doit être récusée parce qu'elle tend à masquer cet hiatus (de Beauvoir 1970: 16 f).

Beauvoir wants to unmask the lies and clichés of bourgeois culture concerning old age. Again, as in *Le Deuxième Sexe*, the subject of her treatise becomes the constructed "other" of discourse: "Les mythes et les clichés mis en circulation par la pensée bourgoise s'attachent à montrer dans le vieillard un *autre*" (de Beauvoir 1970: 9). In Beauvoir's analysis, old age becomes "the other" of life. The human being will not accept its unavoidable destiny. A voice within declares absurdly that this will never happen. Others may grow old, not oneself (de Beauvoir 1970: 11). But her idea is neither to beautify old age nor to form positive alternative concepts. It is Beauvoir's interest to revise the meaning of aging. And as a philosopher, she returns to the existentialist concepts of being and time, following Sartre's *L'Etre et le Néant*. To exist as a human being then is a constant challenge of redefining one's self in time. Existentialists are not interested in origin or the past. They fervently embrace the future as the possibility of living out one's own perspectives of being. Consequently, they adore youth, with which they associate activity and the future (transcendence), and abhor old age, with which they associate a passive past (immanence).

> Exister, pour la réalité humaine, c'est se temporaliser: au présent nous visons l'avenir par des projets qui dépassent notre passé où nos activités retombent, figées et chargées d'exigences inertes. L'âge modifie notre rapport au temps; au fil des années, notre avenir se raccourcit tandis que notre passé s'alourdit. On peut définer le vieillard comme un individu qui a une longue vie derrière lui et devant lui une espérance de survie très limi-

> tée. Les consequences de ces changements se répercutent les unes sur les autres pour engendrer une situation, variable selon l'histoire antérieure de l'individu, mais dont on peut dégager des constantes (de Beauvoir 1970: 383).

Unfortunately, Beauvoir follows Sartre's discursive dichotomy of youth and future vs. old age and past. – A blunt generalization that does not take into account how little young people are concerned with their future, and how powerfully old people through their much broader experience of life and time can refigure their future, as short as it may be. And unfortunately she also follows Sartre in a second discursive nexus of future and volition. Sartre has no concept of a future that is not planned. The existentialist's quest is to master and direct one's future. There is no space in Sartre's theory for a future that befalls the subject as does an illness or old age. Thus Beauvoir cannot see anything positive in old age. She does not adhere to Sartre in his attempt to formulate an abstract concept of time that leaves out the living factor of aging: of course, theoretically, future always becomes past, as Sartre argues. But this concept does not take into account the subject's body and spirit growing old:

> Sartre a expliqué ce décalage dans L'Etre et le Néant: "Le futur ne se laisse pas rejoindre, il glisse au passé comme ancien futur ... De là cette déception ontologique qui attend le Pour-soi à chaque débouché dans le futur. Même si mon présent est rigoureusement identique par son contenu au futur vers quoi je me projetais par-delà l'être, ce n'est pas ce présent vers quoi je me projetais car je me projetais vers ce futur en tant que futur, c'est-à-dire en tant que point de rejoignement de mon être" (de Beauvoir 1970: 390).

The older a person grows, the vaster his past becomes. And because Beauvoir argues that it is the past that defines the present, and with the present, the present's aspirations for the future, a huge past will weigh down these aspirations and lead to the passivity so typical of very old people (de Beauvoir 1970: 395). There is no escaping one's past, certainly not by growing older and living longer. At a given point in time, the human being's past will finally catch up with its future.

> Pour S. de Beauvoir, la vieillesse signifie l'ingérence de la mort au coeur de la vie même. L'angoisse face à la vieillesse est donc bien l'angoisse face à la mort: la vieillesse implique la défaite de la vie en tant qu'elle se révèle une entreprise solitaire, et le triomphe du néant, la découverte de gouffre béant que, depuis l'enfance, Simone recouvrait de branchages (Halpern-Guedj 1998: 112).

Betty Halpern-Guedj is aware of the existentialist meaning the concept "growing old" has in Beauvoir's thinking. However, her mere identification of old age and death falls short of a recognition of the utterly diverse structures of, and therefore effects that these two concepts have on human life. Because death, as much as it may be the other of life, does nothing but destroy life. What is the importance of future and aspirations once you're dead? Old age has a much more devastating effect on life, because it destroys the meaning of future and aspirations while you keep on living. More so, it enhances the stifling factor of a past lived

while you're still yearning for a future, a promised land, that you will never reach. And because of this argumentation, Beauvoir can come to the conclusion that old age is the one mode of existence that expresses adequately the *conditio humana* from an existentialist point of view:

> La vieillesse n'apparaît pas, chez Ionesco, chez Beckett comme la limite extrême de la condition humaine mais, comme dans Le Roi Lear, elle est cette condition même enfin démasquée (de Beauvoir 1970: 226).

Whereas the "non-old" individual, the "young," denies the otherness of old age and rejects any contingency, making old age a taboo, the older subject tries to defy the looming shadow of old age, while it is steadily growing. There is a desperate fight for closure of the self, which is especially well reflected in the autobiographical project. By writing one's past with the intention of closure, the older person tries to escape a future that he or she believes is either non-existent or not worth living. De Man's tropos of "epitaphic" (de Man 1979) is an excellent image for this constellation. However, it should be governed by old age and not by death. The autobiographical trick, as de Man would argue, to posit a face and voice that speaks to us as if from beyond the grave, is the last resort of faked closure. Curious that both de Man and Derrida follow this false lead instead of deconstructing what is at stake in the autobiographical: the screening of despicable old age by the well-known self-indulgent discourse of death that is far less devastating to the human subject than growing old is. Derrida's at the same time quite ironic and yet very typical attempt of turning autobiography into "thanatographie" (Derrida 1982) by playing off the written text against the living subject also avoids any recognition of the meaning of old age for the autobiographical. Like de Man, he makes use of a rhetorical shortcut that turns the living author of an autobiography into a dead specter. Of course, one intention of writing an autobiography may be to become immortal–a very traditional rhetorical argument. Yet the author of an autobiography is not simply dead, his relationship to his writing is much more complicated. To say that he is old leaves more space to contemplate this relationship. As an old person the autobiographic author on the one hand tries to gain closure through telling and naming his past, while on the other hand the subject of his text falls to pieces. Still alive, he is faced with the fragmentated state of his selfhood. A mode of being that of course appeals to both Derrida and de Man, and concurs with their own findings. But in order to grasp the devastating effect of this realization, you need a living author, suffering at the sight of his own fragmentation of selfhood, like Simone de Beauvoir: "Je n'arrive pas à y croire. Quand je lis imprimé: Simone de Beauvoir, on me parle d'une jeune femme qui est moi" (de Beauvoir 1963: 684). The whole problematic of fragmentated selfhood lies in this little word "est": old age means *to be* and at the same time *to have been*. Identity becomes temporary. So much so that the autobiographic "I" that is supposed to govern the autobiographical pact, is subjected to metamorphosis:

> A 20 ans, à 40 ans, me penser vieille, c'est me penser autre. Il y a quelque chose d'effrayant dans toute metamorphose. J'étais stupéfaite, enfant, et même angoissée quand je réalisais qu'un jour je me changerais en grande personne. Mais le désir de demeurer soi-même est généralement compensé dans le jeune âge par les considérables avantages du statut d'adulte. Tandis que la vieillesse apparaît comme une disgrâce (de Beauvoir 1970: 11).

But where does that leave the autobiographical project? What becomes of the autobiographical "I" and its pact with the reader, when metamorphosis comes into play?

What is at stake then in the autobiographical is an attempt at closure of selfhood triggered by the discursive unacceptability of old age, an attempt that belies itself by revealing at the same time the fragmentation of a personal identity that the aging author is steadily outgrowing.

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Autobiography as Social Practice in Early Modern German-Speaking Areas

Historical, methodological, and theoretical perspectives[1]

Gabriele Jancke

Early modern autobiographical writings do not conform to a classical understanding of autobiography as a well-defined literary genre. The selves that have been articulated in these texts likewise are not very similar to the modern, autonomous individuals that we expect in autobiographical writing, at least in relation to European sources. Modern as well as pre-modern, European as well as non-European autobiographical writing have nonetheless been read widely by scholars interested in questions of individuality, and the genre of autobiography itself is still following the lead of Jacob Burckhardt, in spite of the arguments that have been raised against this view.[2] These texts have been used as material for biographical narratives, as well as questions of experience and subjectivity.[3] The following essay will look first at early modern autobiographical texts from a different angle, focusing on communication and writing strategies, thus providing in short form the results of a larger study.[4] It will, then, reflect in methodological and theoretical terms on what has been presented in the first part, addressing the more classical topics of scholarship on autobiography, as well as questions of authorship and agency and of reading the texts as historical sources.

I. Material, questions, and results

When Nicolaus Cusanus visited his place of birth, the small town of Kues on the river Mosel, in 1449, he decided to produce a very short autobiography, written in Latin (consisting of half a page of printed text). At that time, he was 48 years old and a doctor in canon law; he had made a career in the service of the Roman church and was about to be appointed cardinal. In addition, as is well known, he

1 Many thanks for critical remarks and comments to Hülya Adak, Thomas M. Safley, and the participants of the Wissenschaftskolleg Seminar on "Literary Theory: Comparative and/or Global II," Berlin, July 2003. – The first part of this essay was published in Jancke 2002c.

2 Burckhardt 1860, Misch 1949-1969, Niggl 1977 and Niggl 1989/1998; recent historical collections: Porter 1997, von Greyerz & Medick & Veit 2001, van Dülmen 2001; pointed criticism of the traditional approach: Bynum 1980/1982, Davis 1986, Sabean 1996, see also the review of van Dülmen 2001 by Jancke 2002a with further references.

3 Critical remarks on this way of dealing with autobiographical writing: Günther 2001.

4 Jancke 2002b; detailed references can be found there.

was a distinguished mathematician, philosopher, and theologian, as well as a prolific writer in a number of other genres. In his autobiography, which he ordered to be written ("*iussit scribi*"), he speaks about himself in the third person–"he" and "Nicolaus de Cusa." He is rather sketchy about his life and concentrates on a small number of facts–his parents' names, his father's profession, his graduation at Padua–but he doesn't mention the subject of his graduation, canon law, his services to Pope Eugenius IV, and his nomination for cardinal. He sums up in the following words: "And in order that all should know that the Holy Roman Church regards neither the place nor the family of birth, but is instead a very liberal donor of rewards for virtues he, the same cardinal, here ordered this story to be written to the praise of God ..."[5]

Let us stop here to look at what Cusanus is doing. The image he draws of himself does not consist of a full and richly detailed picture of his life. Instead it gives a few facts, reducing his life to a mere skeleton and omitting many things we would like to know. He mentions a very small range of topics–seemingly well chosen–among which his career, Pope Eugenius IV, and the relationship between the Pope and the new cardinal play a dominant role, but he leaves out many other topics. Rather than displaying a mere inability to express himself, the otherwise so articulate clergyman had a precise view of what he wanted as he let his readers explicitly know in the sentence quoted above: "And in order that all should know..." He addressed an audience that he called "*cuncti*," or "all"; but since his text is in Latin he must have meant scholars, most likely educated clergymen like himself. What he was doing, then, was *communicating* his self, that is, certain features of it, to other people, envisioning his career and himself in a single important relationship. Thus, his autobiography is a *social practice* that has an *audience* in mind, the action itself occurring at a certain *time*, in a certain *personal situation*, and being part of a certain *social context*.

We could go on now and explore this individual autobiography as an *individual* practice in detail. But let us first take a step into a more general direction and look at the other autobiographical writings of the period, concentrating on what can be said about autobiographical writing as a *social* practice. In order to do this, it is necessary first to consider contexts, then languages and audiences, and finally ways of acting in relationships.

1. Texts

I have collected 234 autobiographical writings by 179 persons. That is to say, several authors wrote more than one autobiographical text. All the texts have already been printed; that means that we have those which were given to a print-

[5] Cusanus 1983: 603 (written at Kues, 21 October 1449): "Et ut sciant cuncti sanctam Romanam ecclesiam non respicere ad locum vel genus nativitatis, sed esse largissimam remuneratricem virtutum, hinc hanc historiam in dei laudem iussit scribi ipse cardinalis...".

ing public–by the authors themselves or by some later editors who deemed the respective document worth reading by a wider audience. The texts cover their authors' lives in part or more fully, and the authors wrote them on their own, in some cases after being asked or urged to do so, but never so strongly that it could be interpreted as them having been forced to do so. In most cases, the authors wrote about themselves in the first person, while some chose to write in the third person, as we witnessed with Cusanus. Further, all of them were male scholars who might have known examples from antiquity. Others, for example abbesses and soldiers, chose the "we"-form, mostly mixed with the "I"-form, all of these stressing the fact of their belonging to a group or community.[6]

The texts cover a wide range of topics, either briefly, as in the case of Cusanus, or in detail. Two themes are especially prominent: (1) education insofar as it is received away from home, at schools and universities, in businesses, at courts, and in monasteries; and (2) adult dealings in professional functions in business, church, and politics. Besides strictly autobiographical topics, there are often others, most importantly theology, family, business, and politics. Some subjects, however, are always missing, among them very often the events of their childhood. Other themes are included which we might not necessarily consider as autobiographical in a strict sense.[7] Therefore, this could lead us to the conclusion that these writers might have lacked the capability to produce a proper autobiographical text. Yet, it seems much more fruitful to ask instead what the authors had in mind when they included one topic and omitted another.

In the wide field of egodocuments or self-narratives (*Selbstzeugnisse*),[8] this sample obviously contains more than autobiographies narrowly defined. Of the kinds of egodocuments classified by Benigna von Krusenstjern, however, my sample includes just autobiographical documents; the writer's person appears as a subject being described, not just as a narrator or commentator. The texts vary considerably in length, style, and genre, and they are often mixtures of various sorts; none of those features made me exclude a text. All of them were written between 1400 and 1620, the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, but most of them in the sixteenth century. My main interest was the situation of writing and communication. Therefore, I took the *period the authors were writing in,* not the *period they were writing about* as relevant for assembling my sources.

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6 For the sense of belonging to a group, articulated by a narrative perspective of "we" in autobiographical writing, see also Schlotheuber 2004; I am grateful to Eva Schlotheuber for giving me her essay in manuscript before publication and for many illuminating discussions.

7 More detailed discussion: Jancke 1996: 97-118.

8 This has been a much debated field recently in early modern and medieval history; see Jancke 2002b: 8f., Schulze 1996, Krusenstjern 1994; Arnold & Schmolinsky & Zahnd 1999, Schlotheuber 2004.

2. Contexts

All the autobiographical writings in the sample originate in the German-speaking lands, including Switzerland, the Habsburg lands, and Bohemia. That means that the authors spent at least part of their lives in those places and also made that fact a subject of their writing. Most of them were living in German-speaking lands at the time of writing, but not all originally came from there. Some immigrated from Italy, France, the Netherlands, or today's Slovenia or Croatia.

Nearly all the autobiographical writers were Christians (178) and male (171), and they possessed at least a rudimentary Latin education received at grammar schools or universities. Accordingly, many of them later worked as theologians, lawyers, and doctors, often in service of political authorities of the Holy Roman Empire, of territorial states, or of towns. Merchants are not found in large numbers (23). Artisans and teachers mostly practiced just for a time, afterwards often starting a scholarly career; at the time of writing almost all of them were active as scholars. A considerable number of male and female authors belonged to the nobility or the patriciate (one-third). So, autobiographical writing of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is not the bourgeois activity that we have come to expect. In total, some two-thirds of the authors belonged to a special secular or religious estate. Of the eight female authors, three were abbesses and four nobles. Most of the authors by far, male and female alike, have to be counted among the social elites of the Christian majority; a third of them were clergy. The only Jewish writer, Josel of Rosheim, was a merchant, community leader, and at the same time the most important Jewish political representative in the Holy Roman Empire of the sixteenth century.

The autobiographical writings lead us into varied social contexts. The writers set out to articulate a variety of autobiographical perspectives, according to their religious and gender affiliation, their social position, occupation, and status, and not least according to their motivations, abilities, and intentions. Moreover, the authors' perspectives often stood in opposition to others and could be fiercely contested. Polemical and apologetic texts are not uncommon. Some social milieus and occupations are strongly represented, the foremost being that of male scholars and clergy. Cusanus belongs to both groups, and he also shows some typical traits of such writers, in addressing the topics of professional success, upward social mobility, and an important social relationship with a male superior. In his autobiography, he articulates the perspective of a successful high-ranking Roman Catholic cleric, stressing his own qualifications and the recognition of those qualifications by a long-term employer of his services. Even if he did not know about other clerics and scholars who were also writing autobiographical texts, he in fact shared values, experiences, and behavior with many of those people, and like a growing number of others, he chose to communicate these through an autobiographical text.

3. Languages and audiences

That Cusanus wrote his autobiography in Latin seems to be self-evident and not in need of further exploration; he was after all a scholar and a Roman Catholic cleric, trained in Latin and using it as a common language on many occasions. Moreover, until the Reformation, all of his fellow scholars and clerics also wrote their autobiographical texts in Latin, with one exception: Johann of Soest (1448-1506), who was a physician–and therefore also had a Latin education–at the time of writing his autobiography but had been earlier a professional court singer and was still a poet writing in German. He chose the German language and the poetic form for his autobiography, too.

Cusanus and Soest exemplify the two possibilities that existed throughout the studied period for those who were Latin-educated. Roughly half of them turned to Latin, the other half to German, when writing their autobiographical texts. Mixtures of both also occurred very often. Their choice of language related them to their social surroundings, *expressing* the culture they belonged to and at the same time *shaping* that culture themselves. In either case, the language of the text played a part. Writing in Latin, which is the case for one third of all texts, authors related to other Latin-educated scholars as their social group as well as their audience. The relationships that mattered here were mostly relationships among men, representing a special type of male bonding, with ritualized forms of behavior among themselves, excluding the uneducated as well as those populations and scholars using another learned language than Latin. Modern scholars, for example Merry Wiesner-Hanks, have analyzed male bonding among sixteenth century artisans,[9] but it was a strong feature also of learned cultures, giving participants a distinguished status. All the female authors wrote in German or another vernacular, even if they were able to write in Latin and did so in other cases, like the Nuremberg abbess Charitas Pirckheimer. When addressing her fellow nuns, German was the adequate language for her, also being the language of her dealings with political and clerical authorities.

Writing in Latin or in German–or, for that matter, some other vernacular like French, Dutch, or Italian–did not simply draw a clear dividing line between scholars and non-scholars. In reality, scholars were themselves following different paths in this respect. And to complicate matters further, some scholars specifically addressed a scholarly audience in German, as did Daniel Greiser, a Lutheran clergyman and superintendent at the Saxon residence of Dresden (1504-1591), who wrote in 1587 as a very old man. His words are especially illuminating. In the introduction to his printed German autobiography, he declares that he does not intend in the least to address an uneducated public but mainly his clerical subordinates, the pastors in and around Dresden. This was not only

[9] Wiesner 1989.

made apparent by the Latin phrases he mixed into his German text but also, so he argues, by the contents of his writing: In describing his own life he was useful as a model for his professional colleagues and subordinates but not for common people. He tells his readers that if he had wished to be of use for the uneducated, he would have made religious doctrine his topic.

What we can see here is that even a printed text written in the vernacular could clearly be aimed at a limited, elite social group. So we have to look not just at the language of an autobiographical text but also at the writer him- or herself, at his or her knowledge of languages, and at the more or less explicit references to the intended audience. Most autobiographical writers (eight-ninths) had an audience in mind, and most of those specified which audience. For all social groups of writers, family and descendants came foremost. In this respect neither Cusanus nor Daniel Greiser was typical. But writing for family and descendants did not mean aiming at a strictly private and exclusive audience. Instead, kinship and other networks generally seem to have been part of a type of public. Most writers (three-quarters of those writing with an audience in mind) sought to reach their audience by manuscript, and this kind of distribution (for often manuscripts were copied and/or circulated) was a form of publication which sufficed the specified and personally close audiences the authors had in mind in so many cases. The authors who got their autobiographical writings printed, on the other hand, did not necessarily intend a general public but also some limited and specified group as audience, a point exemplified by the case of Daniel Greiser.

4. Acting in relationships

The autobiographical texts strongly suggest that authors were acting socially when writing them. This is most evident when we consider languages and audiences. Furthermore, it emerges clearly that autobiographical writers were not isolated individuals but social beings, belonging to certain social, professional, religious, and gender groups, moving in certain social contexts and relationships. This is, additionally, what they themselves described in their autobiographical writings. Let's look now at what they were doing exactly when writing autobiographical texts. I'll concentrate on two points.

First, all those who were writing for their family and descendants did so from a position of authority. They were heads of a domestic household, constituted by marriage, and they wanted to communicate useful information as well as an exemplary life to the next generation, mostly making their didactic intentions explicit. Insofar as the writers were male—and they nearly all were—their information as well as their example could be used directly by their male descendants. In that way writers strengthened their social position as heads of households as well as stressing their social roles as professionals. Scholars and clergymen seem to have been most active, but those writing as the heads of other types of house-

holds–convents, monasteries, bishops' and princely courts–should be included here. Nearly all female writers were heads of some sort of household at the time of writing, either as widows or as abbesses.

Second, male Christian scholars and clergymen emerge as the numerically dominant group of autobiographical writers. One type of relationship stands out as the most prominent among them: patronage. Cusanus, again, is quite typical here. What he describes sketchily but unmistakably is his relationship to the main patron of his life and career, Pope Eugenius IV. Since the Council of Basel when Cusanus abandoned his former patron, the count of Manderscheid, and his former support of the Council, in favor of supporting a papal church, Pope Eugenius IV had acted as his patron and Cusanus as Eugenius's client. By writing his short autobiography, Cusanus demonstrates this patronage relationship and honors his patron, the pope. His audience, "*cuncti*" (all), is also part of the action insofar as the act of honoring a patron needs others to stand by and appreciate it. His audience has to understand without further explanation the character of the relationship as well as the norms of behavior. So Cusanus is not just *describing* patronage but also *acting* as client. His autobiography is his *way of acting* here. The relevant social knowledge on the side of the audience could be taken for granted.

As in the case of Cusanus, autobiographical texts were often used as a way of acting directly within specific relationships. Autobiographical writing as social practice has many facets**,** several of which center around the world of scholars and their patronage relationships, and this continues into the sixteenth century and Protestant surroundings. In this respect, Cusanus was not in the least an old-fashioned writer, and the Reformation was no watershed that put an end to or limited such practices. On the contrary, the Reformation seems to have encouraged them. This would be another story, however.

The implications of this analysis are historical, methodological, and theoretical. First, we cannot go on telling the story of the rise of the Western individual, at least not in combination with autobiographical writing. Second, we will have to look at contexts, situations, and strategies as part of our methodology for discovering the uses of autobiographical writing. Third and last, such an approach will have consequences for our understanding of autobiography as a literary genre as well, situated as it is in a wide field of different ways of writing about oneself and very much concerned with shaping social relationships that matter.

II. Categories in question: autobiography, self, and authorship

This essay did not begin with a clear definition of autobiography. Similarly, I did not start my *research* with a clear-cut conception of what my sources would and should be. Quite the contrary: When I realized that early modern autobiographical writing for the most part did not conform to modern views of autobi-

ography as a well-defined literary genre, I decided to accommodate my own understanding in order to be able to grasp early modern views of this type of text.

I took such an approach for methodological as well as theoretical reasons. Being interested in the historical dimensions of our own societies as well as the historical dimensions of our contemporary scholarly knowledge means taking into account that there might be differences between our own categories and those of former societies. So, when I discovered that there are few early modern texts which could be categorized as autobiographies in a modern sense, but quite large numbers which might be called autobiographical writing in a wider sense, there were two options. First, I could have stated that evidently there was a sense of autobiography which was minimally developed and, consequently, disappointing for the modern scholar.[10] Second, the state of things might be seen as a starting point. There were few autobiographies, but lots of autobiographical writing, and it would not be worthwhile to dismiss all these fascinating, different, and creative texts simply because they were unfit for my categories. So I decided to follow this line of reasoning and to find out about the meanings, aims, strategies, and uses of early modern autobiographical writing. This also meant that there was a further methodological issue involved: In order to uncover what was implied in autobiographical writing for early modern writers, it would be necessary to contextualize the sources–in their own times and settings.

Using the methodological tool of contextualizing sources in an extensive way need not end in blind empiricism, as an aim in itself, amassing facts and information but getting lost without theoretical and conceptual orientation. Instead, contextualizing sources may lead to new insights and questions, helping to develop new theoretical perspectives that might then be tested on other material and maybe in different cultural settings. In my case, I decided not to collect all types of self-narratives, but just those that deal with their authors' lives briefly or amply and that the authors had written on their own. As a consequence, there are many writings included which are part of larger texts, such as family histories, city and convent chronicles, or biographical reference works. The texts comprise fewer topics than we would expect. For example, childhood would be a large and common topic in modern autobiographies from the late eighteenth century onward but is almost absent in early modern autobiographical writing. Also missing are self-reflection and description and analysis of emotional experiences, or of personal life with family and friends. There are other topics included that we wouldn't deem necessary for autobiographical writing, such as religious and theological polemics, naming of persons standing in some relation to the writer, listing of gifts given and received, prayers, and passages addressed to intended readers. Finally, autobiographical writing is strongly connected with a broad range of different types of texts, for example, poetry or hymns, account books or

[10] For this approach recently, see Velten 1995.

documents of possessions, polemics, didactic literature, or funeral sermons. There are almost no limits, and the writers' creativity is astonishing in finding themselves a place in existing conventions of writing and in combining elements of literary traditions, thereby adapting those traditions for their own uses.

The picture that emerges does not coincide with modern autobiography. Nevertheless, it is consistent in itself. Early modern autobiographical texts often are not an autonomous body of writing. Instead, numerous texts are part of a larger text. Frequently, they are a mixture of genres that deal extensively with the outer world and the relations of the writer to other persons, and they explicitly take up a dialogue with their readers. Moreover, full autobiographies from the period fit in with this picture in their main features: They are part of the larger field of autobiographical writing in their time. So, to mark this insight more pointedly, I have chosen to speak about "Autobiography as Social Practice" in the title of my paper.

For a theory of autobiographical writing, it might be useful to take the various possible traits that I have mentioned into account and add them to those features that we commonly deem to be connected with autobiography. We would thereby gain a broader range of possibilities within which to situate the texts that we are dealing with. Such an approach would have two advantages in respect to theory. First, the approach would be more inclusive, enabling us to widen our often very small basis of relevant and canonical texts. At the same time, it would make us more sensitive about mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of texts that are implied in the *categories* we make use of. We would have to think more explicitly about which texts to include in our sample, which to exclude from it, and the reasons why we should do so. Second, the approach would enable us to ask questions about why certain features would be combined by writers to make up a certain type of autobiographical writing, who did so, to what ends, with which strategies, and towards which audience. Our theoretical concepts thus would not prescribe a fixed combination of traits as elements of a static and a-historical concept. Autobiography would become one possible mixture of elements in a wide field of autobiographical writing. This would provoke our asking for the reasons underlying certain defined combinations, this way opening as well the view for different cultural and historical settings.[11]

To discuss concepts of autobiography and autobiographical writing is no mere debate of "how many texts" and "which texts." Implicit also is a way of looking for the self or, as I would prefer to say, selves or persons. In our scholarship, con-

[11] For a very fruitful theorizing of literary critics, mostly on modern autobiographical writing–taken into account in a very wide sense and called "life narrative"–and in similar directions as suggested here, see Smith & Watson 2001, esp. "Appendix A: Fifty-two Genres of Life Narrative," 183-207. See also recent work in the social sciences and anthropology on genres and context in autobiographical narratives: Chamberlain & Thompson eds. 1998.

cepts of autobiography and of the self are interrelated in many respects. Conventionally, we use autobiographical writings as sources for questions of the self. Privileging this type of text, we don't look further in search of other possible sources.[12] We also usually have a fixed set of characteristics in mind. The self we are looking for is an autonomous being, free from social and religious relationships and their obligations–but we don't speak about the support given in relationships–, a being concentrated on his inner self, his thoughts, emotions, and intellectual and artistic creativity, using his autobiographical writing for self-expression in the fullest possible sense. This very special self is said to be primarily a Western one; and not so explicitly, but distinctly, it seems to be a male, Christian, urban, intellectual, writer's or artist's self.

When looking at early modern autobiographical writing, *this* type of self doesn't seem to emerge very clearly. Instead, there is distinct stress on the outer world and the writers' social relationships. What shows up is no inner self but a person with many outward elements.[13] This result stands in analogy to those just mentioned about the forms of autobiographical writing.[14] So, obviously, there is a connection between both results, and I would like to draw the same theoretical conclusions in respect to describing persons. First, we should widen the range of possible characteristics of persons in order to realize which *concept of person* we find articulated in our respective texts. Second, we should contextualize our findings in historical and cultural as well as in personal and situational settings.[15]

In autobiographical writing, there are several *levels, articulating the writer's person*. First and most obviously, there is the person described with biographical facts, sometimes ranging chronologically from birth to the writer's present, but very often picking out some life span or just certain fields of life, not always narrated in form of a story with a plot. At least in early modern texts, there are many non-narrative and non-chronological ways of describing one's own person. Frequently the texts are very factual; often facts are interspersed among some argument or polemics. On the other hand, authors are very prominent in their role as writers, commenting on the aims and uses of their texts and addressing their readers throughout their text. So, on this level we see the writers acting directly, engaging in dialogue with an audience, describing parts of their selves, and shaping themselves as communicative actors. It is clearly recognizable that they make

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12 With a critical stance to this approach and, consequently, using other sources: Sabean 1996.

13 Contrasting these two concepts of person: Shweder & Bourne 1984.

14 See Kormann 2004, referring to Olejniczak 1996, both using the term "heterology"; on Kormann's important book, see also Jancke 2005.

15 On early modern concepts of person, see Ulbrich & Sabean 2003. At Free University, Berlin, there is also a research group "Selbstzeugnisse in transkultureller Perspektive" (Self-narratives in transcultural perspective) active focusing on concepts of person in autobiographical writing. See their homepage at <http://www.fu-berlin.de/selbstzeugnisse>; most recent publication: Jancke & Ulbrich eds. 2005.

use of the resources in writing that they have, and their practice of everyday writing is therefore relevant to our understanding of their autobiographical texts.

Equally clear is the authors' *agency as autobiographical writers*–they make use of resources and traditions in order to shape situations and relationships actively and consciously.[16] Insofar as they engage in autobiographical dialogue[17] their writing cannot be grasped by theoretical approaches, conceptualizing autobiographical texts as monologues. In this respect, as well as in others, early modern autobiographical writers present their own persons as involved in relationships, in acting and communicating with others, and in forming social positions or contending for them. Their agency as writers should lead us to reconsider not so much the death of the author as the *existence of the author*[18]–and the reader as well–and to take a new look at how writers deal with existing traditions and discourses, using them as resources in their social situations.

So, we can use *autobiographical writing as sources* in manifold ways. First, we can look at the literary traditions and conventions of writing to be found in these texts, and we can ask about the abilities of writers, their training, and the resources they were equipped with. We can further ask how they made use of the resources at their disposal. Often there were choices involved, such as that regarding languages in autobiographical writing. One important task would be to find out about such possibilities and the reasons why writers would take up one or the other alternative. Further, we can look at the role of the narrator or of the writer as a communicative actor. Here we can ask which role he or she is shaping for him- or herself, with whom and to what ends she or he might be engaging in dialogue. We can also ask about the situation of writing, about the author's position in life and society at this point, and about the incentives for writing that derive from this situation and position. For example, at the time of writing, most writers of early modern autobiographical texts were heads of some sort of household, ranging from a family household to a bishop's, prince's, or even the emperor's court, or to a convent's household. Such texts are shaped thoroughly by the writer's social position, which bears an important influence on an author's perspective on life and society. So, autobiographical texts are first and foremost sources for the writers' views as those views are shaped by their social positions, which are constituted in turn by factors of religion, status, age, and gender, among others. Lastly, we can look at biographical and other facts presented in autobiographical texts. Here we can ask in the traditional way what facts we can get hold of and how reliable the texts are in this respect. At this point we might find information differing from presentations in secondary sources and, more-

16 For this view of agency, see the work of Natalie Zemon Davis, for example Davis 1995: 203-212, Davis 2001a: 328.

17 Taking autobiographical dialogue into account as a decisive feature: Davis 1995: 5-62. 220-259; Davis 2001b.

18 See Jannidis 2000, also Biagioli & Galison (eds.) 2003, Chartier 1994.

over, differing from other primary sources. Concerning facts mentioned and described in autobiographical writings, historians' opinions differ widely. Some hold that there is no reliability to be found in autobiographical sources because of the subjectivity of the writers' perspectives. It has to be called to mind here that in all types of texts and sources there is a certain viewpoint toward reality implied, and in any case the viewpoint represents a social construction and has to be made explicit by scholars if they are to understand the source. Autobiographical texts are no different in that respect, and the much-lamented subjectivity might as well be used as one of the subjects for investigation. Other historians concentrate on the construction of reality at large in autobiographical writing, and this is also an important way of reading the sources as devices for presenting reality, and as ways of choosing material from that reality which is then woven into a narrative or argumentative strategy. We can combine those different approaches to facts and reality. There will be many ways autobiographical writing can contribute to our knowledge about societies and especially about their members' concepts of agency. What has been said above about patronage in early modern scholars' lives and autobiographical writings is one such facet of knowledge.

My arguments so far tend towards a certain approach to theoretical concepts. Our theoretical tools should be open to various elements in order not to exclude phenomena from consideration a priori, and the tools are very much in need of critical reflection.

Historical evidence played a large part in my argument. More precisely, the evidence of my sources themselves, in their forms and types, as well as their contents, was of consequence for conceptualizing our theoretical tools. I don't propose, however, to develop theory as an afterthought to empirical work in order to have so-called "objective" categories in a positivistic way. Of course, there are our own perspectives involved, and I would not want to silence them. So let me now add some remarks on what is at stake for contemporary society and what are my own views as a scholar living in a *modern* Western society.

Dealing as an historian with *early modern* societies, one of the most important factors with which I have to come to terms is the strangeness of early modern societies.[19] Constantly early modern sources confront scholars with things that are difficult to understand. There are matters that don't fit in with modern categories and that might not be clear in the least, like the body, sexuality, love, or friendship. There are terms with different meanings and a different extent of importance, compared with my own society, like "household" for instance–a very important term in political and conceptual language in early modern times, but today a less important one. There are facts of social life and social knowledge, so well-known and obvious for early modern social actors that they were never spelled out in their writings, like patronage.

[19] Pleading for a hermeneutics of strangeness towards historical societies: Medick 1992: 168.

All these are not just difficulties to be dealt with methodologically. This is one of those areas where encounters are not primarily determined by one's own terms of behavior or one's own understanding. At least there is the chance for a scholar to try to find out about conditions very different from her or his own. A scholar of *early modern* or of *pre-modern societies* generally might become used to testing the validity of his or her own modern categories, developing a stronger sense of their limits. It makes some sense in terms of contemporary politics and society in Germany to try to understand early modern autobiographical writing on their writer's own terms. Dealing with early modern sources might contribute to shaping our own theoretical concepts and to helping us build trans-cultural perspectives. Insofar as that endeavor allows us to glimpse outlooks beyond the hegemonic ones of our own society, the endeavor fulfills an important aspect of the professional role of historians, an aspect with political implications.

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Past and Present of Autobiographical Writing in Turkey

Autobiography in fragments: reading Ottoman personal miscellanies in the early modern era[1]

Derin Terzioğlu

We live in an autobiographical culture. We tend to ascribe a greater degree of authenticity to the autobiographical accounts of actual persons than to accounts written about them by others. Even a novel that we read assumes an altogether new significance, when we are told that it is autobiographical. Whatever may have been written about the impossibility of autobiography or its uncertain boundaries in the last twenty or thirty years, all indicate that we are far from having lost our fascination with the autobiographical. Perhaps the latest evidence for this on the scholarly front is the ongoing search for and discoveries of autobiographical accounts that were written not only in the historical geography labeled "the West," but also in other historical contexts from late Ming and early Qing China to the Islamic Near East before the modern era.[2] It is also in this conjuncture that Ottomanists have discovered that Ottoman literati left written records of their lives more often than was once thought and that the earliest of these records predated the so-called period of Westernization by at least three centuries.[3]

But just what did the personal narratives recently discovered in Ottoman literature mean to the people who composed them? How did Ottoman literati classify these texts and how did they read them, if they read them at all? What significance, if any, did Ottoman readers and writers ascribe to the use of the autobiographical register in different literary genres? Was there any room for the autobiographical in the mental universe of Ottoman literati before their exposure to modern European examples of the genre? We need to seriously consider these questions if we do not want to simply read the Ottoman texts in the light of our modern (or postmodern, as the case might be) notions of "autobiography," "life writings," or "egodocuments."

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2 On Arabic autobiography, the most recent and authoritative study is Reynolds (ed.) 2001. For a sampling of the recent scholarship on East Asia, see Gyatso 1998; Wu 1990; Maraldo 1994.

3 For overviews of the literature see Olgun 1972; Kafadar 1989; Faroqhi 2000: 194-203.

In this regard, it would only be fair to acknowledge that my interest in this line of inquiry has been awakened by a number of recent studies on autobiography in early modern Europe. Responding in part to the abovementioned tendency to discover autobiographical works in other cultures and periods, a number of Europeanists such as Michael Mascuch and Nicholas D. Paige have recently sought to reframe the argument for the uniqueness of the autobiographical turn in early modern Europe by shifting attention away from the canonical texts of "Western autobiography" to the wider patterns of reading, writing, and printing, which, they argue, for the first time made autobiography "truly readable."

For Mascuch, it is a futile exercise to try to identify the "first" autobiography in (Western) history by employing the "conventional parameters of literary genres." He finds it much more important to examine the social, religious, and commercial nexus which enabled autobiography to become a *common cultural practice* (in the Bourdieuan sense) in early modern England. It is also on this ground that Mascuch reaffirms the conclusion of earlier scholars such as Georges Gusdorf that there was an intimate connection between the birth of autobiography and the individualist self at the dawn of (Western) modernity. He even goes further to suggest that "the individualist self is, figuratively speaking, a producer and a consumer of stories about himself and a consumer of stories about himself and other selves which place the self at the center of the system of relations, discursive and otherwise–he is literally a writer and a reader of modern autobiography."[4]

In his exploration of seventeenth century French devotional writing, Paige similarly posits an intimate link between autobiography and modern subjectivity, but also understands that relationship to be much more fraught with tension and ambiguity. Particularly inspiring is a chapter in which Paige examines the historical context in which such earlier works as St. Augustine's *Confessions* and Montaigne's *Essais* came to be read (anachronistically) as precocious examples of Western autobiographical interiority. According to Paige, it was not so much the inherent qualities of these texts as the editorial interventions and marketing strategies of seventeenth century printers and the changing expectations of seventeenth century readers that enabled this reading. Once an autobiographical reading became possible and indeed privileged, on the other hand, texts subjected to and/or inviting such readings inspired others to make use of writing in a similarly introspective manner.[5]

The studies of Europeanists like Mascuch and Paige present a clear challenge to those who argue for the existence of autobiographical accounts in non-Western, and especially pre-print literary cultures. I do not believe, however, that they close the discussion once and for all. Even amongst Europeanists some medievalists and Renaissance scholars might object to their relegation of the Euro-

4 Mascuch 1997: 18-21.
5 Paige 2001: especially 1-64.

pean first-person literature that was written between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries to the "pre-history" of autobiography. Such a teleological perspective, it could be argued, does short shrift both to the multifarious nature of the earlier accounts and to the complexities of the social-historical contexts in which they were written.[6] Some autobiography theorists might also find Paige's insistence on interiority and Mascuch's on individualism as the defining feature of autobiography to be overly constraining.[7] Nevertheless, it still behooves the critics of their arguments to address the question of what the practice of writing about one's life could possibly mean in other cultures and periods.

The present article, then, will explore this question with respect to Ottoman literary culture in the early modern period, defined here as the period from 1500 to 1800. Let me state from the start, however, that it is not my goal here (nor does it seem possible) to make a case similar to Paige's concerning the creation of an "autobiographical mentality" in early modern Ottoman Empire. To the contrary, a central argument of this article is that a good deal of the material that we might today label as "autobiographical" was not readily legible as such, or if it was, it was not necessarily privileged for it in the Ottoman Empire at least until and possibly into the modern period. At the same time, however, Ottoman literati could be quite deliberate in their use of the autobiographical register and could manipulate it in different ways to achieve certain effects on their readers. More importantly, even in the absence of printing and the widespread circulation of books, segments of the Ottoman literati indulged in certain practices of reading and writing that were conducive to autobiography in the broader sense of writing about oneself. In the remainder of this article, I shall try to illustrate these points with respect to a type of source material that has been underutilized by Ottomanists: personal miscellanies or scrapbooks (*mecmūᶜa*).[8]

Miscellanies are only one type of textual source among many in which Ottoman writers wrote about themselves. Autobiographical sketches of varying lengths and forms can also be found in Ottoman biographical dictionaries, hagiographical works, chronicles (particularly contemporary chronicles), and

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6 Cf. Mayer and Woolf (eds.) 1995. There is also a vast literature that situates the autobiographical turn in European culture in the late medieval period. For a nuanced exploration of the meaning of autobiography in late medieval France, see Zink 1999: 157-241.

7 For a recent study that critiques the idea of the autobiographer as an individualistic self, see Eakin 1999: 43-98. Eakin bases his critique not only on the constructivist school in philosophy and literature, but also on recent research on identity and memory in cognitive science, neurology, and developmental psychology. For an overview of the changing trends in autobiography studies, see Smith and Watson c2001: 111-163.

8 For a pioneering study of the autobiographical contents of two scribal notebooks originating from the Ottoman palace, see Fleischer 1994. More recently, Maurits van den Boogert and Jan Schmidt at Leiden University have also embarked on a major research project focused on the miscellanies in that university's Oriental collections.

travel literature as well as in the introductions or conclusions to various religious, legal, or scientific works. Likewise, Ottoman literati wrote some freestanding autobiographical accounts under such titles as *tercüme-i ḥāl* (biography), *sergüzeşt* (book of adventures), or *ṣoḥbetnāme* (book of conversation or companionship). It is quite possible that the use of the autobiographical register was more clearly recognizable in some of these genres (most notably, the *tercüme-i ḥāl*s) and served purposes different from the fragmentary notes in the miscellaneous manuscripts.

On the other hand, miscellanies offer a unique vantage point from which to approach the question of personal narratives in the Ottoman Empire for two reasons. First and foremost, "miscellaneous" seems to have been the very category under which early modern Ottomans classified many texts that we would today have little problem classifying as "autobiographical." Second, Ottoman miscellanies, particularly the scrapbooks or working notebooks, which are full of scribbling of all kinds and many of which show signs of intensive use, offer us as close an access as we can get to the everyday practices of reading and writing in the Ottoman lands. This is important if we want to investigate the wider literary context in which the autobiographical act became possible.

Europeanists have long pointed to a link between the proliferation of more personal kinds of narrative and the increasing privatization of reading and writing in late medieval and early modern Europe. It is argued that, when starting in the late medieval period, and especially after the invention of the printing press, people began to read and write silently and in solitude rather than out loud and in public, it became easier for writers to entrust private matters to paper, while reading, thus having been turned into a more private experience, further enabled individuals to cultivate a sense of the private self. Of course, this process was neither unilinear nor without its contradictions (as when the private self was displayed through the medium of print); but then, as recent literature has made clear, a similar contradiction is built into modern subjectivity itself.[9]

Can we then find a similar space emerging for private uses of writing among Ottoman literati in the early modern era? The answer given in secondary literature is a resounding no. The few scholars who have tackled the question of "Islamic literacy" have stated almost categorically that until print became widespread in the Islamic Near East in the nineteenth century, reading and writing not only retained a high degree of orality, but also remained a deeply communal affair, with dictation and recitation in public gatherings considered to be the norm and indeed required for the accurate transmission of texts written in the Arabic script.[10] While these generalizations might hold true for the juridical literature written by and for the ulema, the seamless picture that they present is

9 Cavallo and Chartier (eds.) 1999. Jagodzinski 1999.

10 Pedersen 1984; Nasr 1995; Messick 1993; Graham 1985; Graham 1987: 79-116.

considerably complicated by the numerous personal miscellanies or scrapbooks that have survived from the period of Ottoman rule. The reasons will be discussed in greater detail further below. First, however, a note about the chronology: There is no need to assume that within Islamdom at large such scrapbooks were a novelty of the early modern period; similar types of texts might well have existed wherever there was a substantial literate culture, as for instance, in Baghdad as early as the ninth century.[11] Nevertheless, the fact is that as far as the central lands of the Ottoman Empire are concerned, many more such scrapbooks have survived from after the sixteenth century.[12] Considering that the same period also witnessed the expansion of book collections and the proliferation of middle brow literature in vernacular Turkish, it is tempting to link the increase in the number of Ottoman scrapbooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the expansion of the realm of writing in Ottoman society.[13] If the collection of Ottoman manuscripts in Leiden University Library is any indication, the practice of keeping personal scrapbooks may have been particularly popular with literati of a more modest sort: low-level bureaucrats, soldiers, and minor sheikhs are certainly well represented among the owners/compilers of the Leiden manuscripts.[14] All this suggests that we are dealing here with a literary practice which may have been fairly widespread among the literate males of Ottoman towns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

What, then, is personal about the Ottoman personal miscellanies? As it is outside the scope of this brief discussion to venture a comprehensive answer, I will present my preliminary findings concerning nine miscellanies or scrapbooks compiled between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, when print technology played no more than a marginal role in the Ottoman world of letters, and one from the mid-nineteenth century, when both print technology and intensive interaction with Western literary models were fast transforming the literary scene. While by no means representative of the larger corpus, this sample still covers a diverse social terrain: of the ten miscellanies considered here, two were compiled by a minor scribe, two by soldiers, and six by Sufi masters. Naturally, the social, professional, or religious affiliations of all compilers were reflected in one way or another in what they chose to include in their scrapbooks.

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11 On the notebook culture of medieval Muslim scholars, see Rosenthal 1947: esp. 6-7; Schoeler 1997.

12 While the rudimentary nature of cataloguing in most manuscript libraries in Turkey and the Middle East does not allow us to undertake a quantitative analysis of the entire corpus, the evidence from the better catalogued European collections of Oriental manuscripts indicates that many more such scrapbooks have survived from after the sixteenth century. For one such exemplary catalogue, see Schmidt 2000.

13 For preliminary investigations into the history of literacy in the Ottoman Empire, see Vatin (ed) 1996; Hitzel (ed.) 1997; Hanna 2003; Erünsal 1988: 1-136.

14 Schmidt 2004.

Religious texts were prominent in the scrapbooks of the three Sufi writers.[15] The scribes wrote as much about appointments and dismissals in various state offices as about events in their own lives.[16] Even the soldiers, who had little use for writing in their professions, tended to have a common preference for more practical kinds of writing such as calendars and divinatory manuals.[17]

These patterns notwithstanding, all of these miscellanies also comprise diverse textual materials that go beyond the "public" functions and persona of their owners. Hence the Sa'di-Rifa'i sheikh Ahmed Raşid (d. 1245/1829) recorded in his scrapbooks not only the spiritual pedigrees, prayers, and magical formulas he had inherited from his masters, but also various notes about himself and his family, and interestingly enough, excerpts from earlier Ottoman chronicles. Apparently, among other things he was an avid reader of histories.[18] Likewise, we find in the scrapbook of a Salonican bureaucrat later in the same century, amongst the usual notes about bureaucratic events and the affairs of his household, excerpts from religiomystical literature. He was by all appearances a pious man who also took an interest in theoretical Sufism.[19] In this sense, then, each scrapbook can be said to have been a personal document simply by virtue of representing the selections of a particular individual for his own use. At the same time, however, it is important to remember that the literati who compiled these scrapbooks were also part of a community of readers. Some apparently allowed (or even asked) others to glimpse into and/or write an entry in their scrapbooks. This seems to have been a particularly popular practice in Sufi circles. In one of his numerous scrapbooks, the Celveti master İsmail Hakkı Bursevi (d. 1137/1725) recorded the personalized notes of blessing he wrote in the scrapbooks of at least eleven different friends and disciples.[20] Likewise, the Halveti master Niyazi-i Mısri (d. 1104/1694) mentions in his diary that he wrote an *ilāhī* and some words of advice in the scrapbook of a certain Fuyuzi Çelebi, a friend or disciple who

15 Niyazi-i Mısri. Mecmūʿa-i Şeyḫ Mışrī. Süleymaniye Library. Reşid Efendi 1218; Mecmūʿa-i kelimāt-ı ḳudsiyye (hereafter MKK) Bursa Library For Rare Printed and Manuscript Books. Orhan 690; İsmail Hakkı Bursevi. Mecmūʿatü'l-fevā'id. Süleymaniye Library. Pertev Paşa 645; Mecmūʿatü'l-ḥaḳḳiyya, Süleymaniye Library. Esad Efendi 3765 (presumed to be an autograph) and Mecmūʿa-i ḥaḳḳī. Süleymaniye Library. Pertev Paşa 637 (copy made in 1217/1802-3 of a miscellany originally compiled in 1135/1722-1723); Ahmed Raşid. Mecmūʿa. Leiden University Library. Cod.Or. 25.762.

16 Leiden University Library. Cod. Or. 12.423; Mecmūʿa, Süleymaniye Library. Hacı Mahmut Efendi 6294 (compiled circa 1253/1837-1294/1877).

17 Cod.Or. 1205 and Cod.Or. 1259 in Leiden University Library.

18 Leiden University Library. Cod. Or. 25.762.

19 Anonymous. Mecmūʿa, Süleymaniye Library. Hacı Mahmut Efendi 6294. 18a, 19a.

20 Bursevi. Mecmūʿatü'l-fevā'id. 14b-15a, 16b, 99b, 100b, 103b. The references given here include only those personal notes that İsmail Hakkı explicitly mentions writing in the mecmūʿa s of his disciples. The scrapbook also contains many other poems, letters and similar notes that İsmail Hakkı mentions writing for his friends and disciples without specifying the context.

frequently came to visit him on the island of Lemnos in 1092/1681.[21] Sufi disciples must have cherished these notes as a memento from their masters as well as a sign of the latter's endorsement of their personal collections.

What is perhaps more difficult for us to understand is the ease with which some Ottoman literati could appropriate the scrapbooks of others. This could perhaps be attributed to considerations about the cost of paper, but it also indicates that the later owners did not necessarily regard the scrapbooks that came into their hands as the personal testaments of previous owners. One such miscellany that shows signs of reuse had originally belonged to an Ottoman scribe, probably employed by the financial department in Istanbul. The miscellany still contains some administrative and autobiographical notes which the first owner had made in the last decade of the seventeenth and the first decade of the eighteenth centuries, but much of his writing appears to have been erased (though not without leaving a trace) by a later owner. This later owner, whose identity we do not know, was clearly less skilled in the art of writing, and had considerably different literary tastes. Among the texts that he filled in the newly gained space we find tales (*ḥikāye*), set in pseudo-historical contexts, and a divinatory manual.[22]

Given the diverse and sometimes circuitous ways in which Ottoman literati compiled these scrapbooks, it is only to be expected that they also had different motivations when they recorded what we might regard as personal information in their scrapbooks. Some of this material was probably recorded because of pragmatic considerations, as would be the case with the notes of debts, loans, and payments recorded in the miscellanies compiled and/or owned by Ottoman soldiers.[23] By contrast, we may presume that it was because Ottoman literati wanted to preserve their memory and perhaps to transmit it to their progeny that they would jot down the dates of important events in their lives: when they entered a particular branch of office, when they left their hometown, or arrived in a new place, when they got married and had children, and, alas, also when these children died, often in infancy.

Not surprisingly, there appears to be a correlation between the length and complexity of these autobiographical passages and the social status and level of literacy of the people who composed them. In the sample examined here, the scrapbooks richest in personal narrative belong to the two most literate and socially most distinguished members of the group: Niyazi-i Mısri and İsmail Hakkı Bursevi. While low-ranking soldiers summarized the essentials of their lives in simple one-sentence notes, these two masters wrote extensively not just about what they did or witnessed on various occasions, but also about their feelings.

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21 Mısri. MKK. 7b.

22 Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 12.423. The second owner erased only the later part of the writing of the first owner and thus started writing from the reverse side of the manuscript.

23 Cod.Or. 1205, cover, flyleaf, 1a; Cod.Or. 1259, 85b in Leiden University Library.

The mystically-inclined Salonican bureaucrat was likewise quite comfortable writing about his joys and sorrows in family life, but then he was writing in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, when the norms concerning the representation of emotions had changed considerably.[24]

Whatever their level of literacy, one type of personal narrative that all the writers examined here seem to have been capable of producing was letters. Almost all the writer/compilers examined here recorded in their notebooks drafts or copies of letters they exchanged with others. While with a few exceptions modern scholarship has focused on the "high" literary examples of Ottoman epistolary literature, many of the letters found in these scrapbooks represent a more humble, quotidian version of letter writing in the Ottoman Empire.[25] Compilers may have recorded these letters for a variety of reasons: to remember, to document, and perhaps also to provide themselves (and in some cases, others) with models in future correspondence.

A somewhat more complex case is presented by the poetry that some of the authors composed and recorded in their scrapbooks. Thanks to the important work done by such literary historians as Paul Losensky, we now know better than to engage in naïve, autobiographical readings of Turco-Persian poetry.[26] Yet in a couple of places in their scrapbooks, both Niyazi-i Mısri and İsmail Hakkı encourage us, the readers, to read their poems in an autobiographical light by prefacing their poems with a brief discussion of when and where they had composed them. Since it was not common practice to make use of such auto/biographical notes in *divan*s or poetical compilations, or in the commentaries written on selected poems, their inclusion in the miscellanies appears particularly meaningful and further points to the role these miscellanies played as personal archives. [27]

Ottoman writers could also insert fragments of their life narratives into texts by others. In this regard, a particularly intriguing and playful example comes from a miscellany that was in the possession of an Ottoman soldier Hasan who served in Tunis as well as his hometown Sinop in the first half of the seventeenth century. The scrapbook contains among other things two divinatory manuals explaining how to draw omens from the Qur'an. One of these manuals, *Fālnāme-i Caʿfer-i Ṣādıḳ*, may have been particularly popular with soldiers, as it is also found in the scrapbook of another Ottoman officer who seems to have served in the Janissary corps in Algiers in the same period. In both scrapbooks, the manual is annotated in the margins, but it is only in the first scrapbook, belonging to

24 For an illuminating study on the history of emotions, see Reddy 2001.

25 A major recent exception is Murphey 2002. On the "high" epistolary tradition, see Uzun 2000; Gökyay 1974; Derdiyok 2000; Tansel 1964.

26 Losensky 1998; Idem 1998: 56-99. Also see Andrews 1985: esp. 3-18, 109-142.

27 Mısri. MKK 81b-89b. Bursevi. Mecmūʿatü'l-fevā'id. 61b. For a critical edition of their entire poetic corpus, see Erdoğan 1998; Yurtsever 2000. For Ottoman commentaries on their poems, see Çaylıoğlu 1999; Ceylan 2000.

Hasan, that the marginal comments present a parallel narrative about how the soldier/copyist and his fellow seamen had "actually" fared on the occasions that they had practiced this form of divination and drawn the omens that were described in the main text. Hence it is written next to a particular omen and its explanation: "This is auspicious. It is good. It is upon this sign that we set sail" (*Mübārekdür, eyüdür, bu fāl ile yelken ḳoduḳ*), and next to another, "This points to an auspicious battle. It is necessary to arrive (there) on Friday," or "This is very auspicious. It was upon this sign that the ships carrying wheat finally arrived." Interestingly, the soldier/copyist did not make any such self-referential comments for the negative omens, instead simply annotating them with such brief remarks as "enemy" or "enemy and patience."[28] Of course, we may question whether these marginal asides indeed referred to events that took place in the life of the person who wrote them, or whether they were simply written to heighten the effect of the divinatory manual in his possession. Even if the latter is the case, however, it is still meaningful enough that the soldier/copyist found it expedient to add his own voice to that of the manual, since this would indicate at the very least a certain degree of awareness about the use of the first-person voice as an authenticating device.

These, then, were some of the different ways in which Ottoman literati engaged in the autobiographical act in the limited space of their personal notebooks. The question that remains to be answered is what the autobiographical components in these notebooks would have signified to the Ottoman readers themselves. Admittedly, the sheer heterogeneity of the corpus makes this question difficult to answer. Moreover, the fact that the vast majority of personal miscellanies have survived in unique copies means that in most cases, there will only be scant evidence for readership. Valuable insights, nevertheless, can still be gained by considering the later history of the miscellanies, where and how they were preserved, under what categories, whether they were cited in other texts, and so on. Annotations made by later owners of the miscellanies can also yield important insights. In the remaining space, I will pursue this line of inquiry with respect to two remarkably different miscellanies compiled by Niyazi-i Mısri, one of the most autobiographical of the writers considered above.

The first scrapbook of Mısrī's is a manuscript of 251 folios, preserved in the Süleymaniye Library as part of the original collection of the Reşid Efendi library in Istanbul. Mısri compiled the bulk of this scrapbook between the years 1058/1648 and 1065/1654-5, when he was in his thirties and a novice undergoing spiritual initiation into the Halveti order of dervishes in the town of Elmalı in southwestern Anatolia.[29] He was still in possession of his manuscript and

[28] Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 1259. 20b-43a. Cf. Leiden University Library, Cod. Or. 1205. 27b-65b.

[29] Mısri. Mecmūʿa-i Şeyḫ Mışrī. Süleymaniye Library. Reşid Efendi 1218.

made a number of additions in the margins circa 1083/1673, when he was at the peak of his career as a Sufi master in Bursa.

When we examine the contents of the manuscript, we find a fairly typical scrapbook that reflects the religious and intellectual horizons of a learned, yet provincial Sufi. The miscellany contains texts in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, although entries in Persian are much fewer and are interspersed with interlinear Turkish translations. In terms of their subject matter, the entries in the scrapbook can be roughly classified into three groups: 1) excerpts from the writings of Sufi masters of the past, which comprise the bulk of the manuscript; 2) excerpts from religio-legal literature, which mostly deal with controversial aspects of Sufism; and 3) a medley of Mısri's own writings, including his earliest poems, autobiographical notes, and medical prescriptions.

From the autobiographical notes, which the Sufi master entered on folios 3a-3b nearly twenty years after he compiled the bulk of the manuscript, we learn that he married his first wife in 1064/1654, as he was nearing the completion of his spiritual training and that he had six daughters from this marriage, five of whom died within a year of their birth. A barely legible note recorded on the margins of folio 252a states that a certain "İbrahim son of İbrahim Efendi from the village of 'Arab … in the kadiship of … took the oath of allegiance [to Mısri?] on 15 Şevval 1065 [1655]." This must have been one of Mısri's earliest disciples. Another note on 250b lists the quantities of an unspecified good that was delivered to twelve men, at least five of whom are clearly identified as artisans. According to a marginal note by the Mevlevi dervish Yusuf Nesib Dede (d. 1126/1714), about whom we shall have more to say below, this was a list of the people to whom Mısri sold candles. Since Nesib Dede writes that he never met Mısri in person, he must have drawn this information from oral reports circulating in Sufi circles.

Mısri, of course, could not have anticipated all the different ways in which later readers would make use of his manuscript. Rather, he must have been concerned first and foremost with compiling a handy source of reference, upon which he could draw for inspiration and instruction as well as guidance. Most likely, it was also to facilitate rapid consultation that he drew up a fairly detailed table of contents (folios 2a-2b), listing the titles of the principal texts that he included in his scrapbook and their corresponding page numbers. Still, there is reason to believe that if not at the time he compiled the original manuscript, then as he built a successful career for himself as a Sufi master, he also began to regard his scrapbook as a memento to be passed on to his progeny and disciples. This might explain why, for instance, he carefully marked the manuscript as his own and gave it a title befitting of a religio-mystical work intended for public circulation. The heading in his handwriting reads: "This is a compilation entitled *Gülşen-i tevḥīd* (The Rose Garden of the Affirmation of Divine Unity) and it belongs to Mısri."

Evidence indicates that later readers, too, regarded the miscellany as a memento from the Sufi master. This is at least very much the case with the earliest

identifiable owner of the manuscript after Mısri, the abovementioned Nesib Dede. It was he who already on the first page highlighted the personal quality of the manuscript with the words:

> This pleasant compilation, which is full of pearl-like words of divine wisdom, was compiled by and written by the very hands of the deceased Mısri Efendi of the Halveti order during the early stages of his spiritual initiation. We had desired to see his beautiful and perfected face, when he was still alive, but this was not what fate decreed. Yet the Divine Lord by virtue of [our] loyalty sent this compilation to us and made us happy as if we had had the chance to converse with him.[30]

Clearly, what lent this manuscript a personal quality in the eyes of Nesib Dede was 1) the fact that it represented Mısri's personal selection during a particular period of his life, and 2) the fact that it had been written in the sheikh's own hand. The Mevlevi writer further highlighted the personal nature of the miscellany by comparing the experience of reading it to the imagined experience of conversing with the compiler himself. This comparison is particularly meaningful, since a great deal of the first-person literature written in this period also had a strong conversational character, and since this character was often stressed in the titles given to these works, such as *Ṣoḥbetnāme* (Book of Companionship or Conversation) and *Mecmūʿa-i kelimāt* (Compilation of Words).

A text that comes much closer to our understanding of a personal narrative, nevertheless, is a second miscellany that Mısri composed nearly thirty years after the first, when he was in his early sixties. Differently from all the miscellanies considered so far, the bulk of this 116-folio manuscript is taken up by what formally speaking can be best described as a diary, a continuous first-person prose narrative which relates the intimate details of Mısri's daily life and thoughts in 1091-2/1680-2. At the time, Mısri was living as a recluse in a small mosque on the island of Lemnos, where he had been exiled by the orders of the Ottoman central government in 1088/1677. All indication is that it was this experience of exile that had turned Mısri into an inveterate diarist. In his diary, the Sufi writer marked the centrality of his exile to his life story by dating each entry by the number of days that had passed since the beginning of his first banishment. As he related how he spent each day, too, he put the emphasis on what he considered to be evidence of his ongoing persecution in the "claws of the House of Osman." More specifically, he was under the conviction that his "enemies" wanted to have him killed as well as raped; that in fact they had already violated his wives and that the two sons born by his wives in between his two exiles were a product of these adulterous relationships.[31] Frequently, too, Mısri interrupted the narration of his everyday tribulations to launch a vindictive criticism of the

30 Mısri. Mecmūʿa-i Şeyḫ Mışrī. 1b.

31 On Mısri's life and thought, see Terzioğlu 1999. For a more detailed discussion of the diary/compilation, see Idem 2002. The present author is also preparing a critical edition and English translation of the entire diary.

leading religious and political authorities of the time, including the *seleft*-oriented Kadızadeli preacher Vani Efendi, members of the Köprülü household, and Sultan Mehmed IV. Or else he engaged in an inspired discussion of his own spiritual state as a persecuted holy man or even prophet. In these passages, the Sufi writer resorted to a more exhortative style, assuming the voice, in turn, of a preacher, a public agitator, or an ecstatic mystic.

In addition, Mısri recorded in this manuscript whole worksheets of kabalistic prognostications, which were drawn from selected verses of the Qur'an or from the writings of the famous Andalusian Sufi and philosopher Muhyiddin İbn 'Arabi (d. 638/1240), and poems, mostly but not exclusively his own. While the inclusion of these disparate texts give the text the character of a compilation, it is important to point out that these writings were also closely connected to Mısri's life story. Almost all the prognostications recorded in the manuscript referred back to events in Mısri's own life and served to "prove" his rather peculiar interpretation of these events. Likewise, eleven of the twelve poems written and copied by him also dated from the period of his second banishment and dealt with some of the same themes as the diary entries in prose.[32]

What, then, were the literary categories that Mısri and his readers considered appropriate for this multi-layered, multi-vocal text? In the manuscript itself, Mısri mentions two terms: *mecmūʿa* and *tārīḫ*, or rather its plural form, *tevārīḫ*, histories or dates. In Ottoman literature, the latter term in both the singular and the plural form was commonly used to describe historical narratives, or chronicles. In addition, the term had been used in earlier Arabic literature to describe diaries or rather chronicles kept in diary form, and it is quite possible that this usage was also known to Mısri who was perfectly literate in Arabic. *Tārīḫ*, nevertheless, was only one of several categories used to describe Ottoman diaries (others being *yevmiyyāt* and *ṣoḥbetnāme*), which seem to have had more heterogeneous origins than their medieval Arabic counterparts. [33]

Mısri's text in fact had a much more personal focus than all the known examples of medieval Arabic diaries and even most Ottoman diaries before the nineteenth century. In view of this fact, it is of particular importance to determine how public or private the Sufi writer intended his text to be. The textual evidence is somewhat ambivalent in this regard. On the one hand, the Sufi wrote explicitly that God gave him permission to write but not to have copies made of his writing. He also mentioned hiding his miscellany under his head at night to prevent intruders from peeking into it without his permission. On the other hand, the Sufi master was not averse to lending some of his "*tevārīḫ*" to friends and disciples and indeed sometimes also to some of his "enemies." He usually

32 Mısri. MKK. 82b-89b. The last of the poems is identified as having been written during his initiation in Elmalı.

33 Makdisi 1986. For a comparative discussion of medieval Arabic and Ottoman Turkish and Arabic diaries and diary-chronicles, see Sajdi 2002.

presented his decision to share his writings with others as a pre-emptive strike: rather than risk an intruder getting hold of his *mecmūʿa*, he would take control and send him a copy of a certain entry.[34]

We do not know what those few people who had a chance to peek into the diary in Mısri's lifetime made of the text. It is clear, nevertheless, that later readers respected the Sufi master's wish that the text not circulate widely. While there are several copies of his later writings in diary format, I have not been able to locate any other copies of either part or whole of the autograph manuscript. The manuscript, nevertheless, was carefully preserved as part of the collection of the Ahmed Gazzi lodge, founded by and named after one of Mısri's principal disciples in Bursa, until the dissolution of all Sufi lodges by the orders of the republican government in the early twentieth century. It must also have been one of the dervishes at this lodge who in 1223/1808 gave the following title to the manuscript: *Mecmūʿa-i kelimāt-ı ḳudsiyye-i ḥażret-i Mışrī,* or *Compilation of the Sacred Words of the venerable Mısri.* The title not only emphasized the strong vernacular, speech-like quality of the text, a common feature of Ottoman personal narratives of this period, but it also made the inflammatory contents of the diary more digestible by linking it with an age-old genre of mystical literature: the compilations of the inspired sayings of Sufi masters, which were normally put together by their disciples.[35]

While I have not been able to find any specific references to the diary by Mısri dervishes elsewhere, the first person to write a vita of Mısri, Rakım İbrahim Efendi (d. 1163/1749-50), had most likely read the text, or was at least familiar with some of its contents, for he went to great lengths to whitewash some of the unsavory incidents the Sufi diarist discussed in it. According to Rakım, Mısri had denied being the father of his legal son 'Ali, not because he actually suspected his wife of adultery but simply to protect his son from also being pestered by his enemies. Similarly, the Sufi master had claimed to be the object of rape attempts only to draw attention to the predicament of another person on the island. Interestingly, the same Rakım Efendi also found it useful to include in his hagiography excerpts from what were presumably other first-person narratives by the Sufi master.[36] Whether the excerpted passages were indeed Mısri's or were simply forged by Rakım Efendi, we shall probably never know.

What the example of Mısri's two autograph miscellanies demonstrates is the distance that separates us from early modern Ottomans in terms of literary habits and attitudes towards texts. Today, loaded as we are with various ideas about the different genres of life writing from autobiography to diary, it is easy for us to privilege the second one of the manuscripts as a diary while referring to the first

34 Mısri. MKK. 56b, 57a.

35 For an illuminating discussion of this genre as employed by South Asian Sufis, see Ernst 1992: 62-84.

36 Rakım. Vāḳı'at-ı pīr-i rūşen. Süleymaniye Library. Izmir 790. 16-7, 91-2.

simply as a miscellany. Clearly, such a distinction did not hold for the Sufi dervishes who preserved and perhaps read the two texts through the eighteenth century. Moreover, while these dervishes seem to have recognized and cherished the two texts as two very personal documents of the Sufi master, it was not necessarily the fact that Mısri had included notes about his life that made the texts personal, or for that matter valuable, for these readers. At least as important, if not more, was the opportunity that the two texts offered to be physically close to a man considered saintly through the traces of his writing and through the illusion of spontaneity created by his seemingly (perhaps rather deceptively) artless way of conversing on paper.

Of course, the two notebooks of Mısri were circulated in a rather specific milieu: that of the Sufi orders. We cannot assume that among the Ottoman society at large, or even among Sufi circles, everyone shared these particular Sufis' attitudes towards texts and textuality. It might even be argued that questions of readership are not really relevant for the scrapbooks of minor bureaucrats, soldiers, and others whose authorial presence did not evoke the same kind of awe as did that of many of the Sufi writers. Nevertheless, the fact is that with or without a readership, a considerable number of people found it useful to keep such personal notebooks, and other people (not just in Europe, but also in the Ottoman lands) cared to preserve them for one reason or another. Thus, we need to ask why in both cases. It might just be the case that in the absence of the printing press and of autobiographical texts that circulated widely before the nineteenth century, the practice of keeping personal notebooks is as close as we get to a literary and cultural practice that sustained the autobiographical act, however ephemeral.

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Menfa: Self-Reflection in Ahmet Mithat's Memoirs after Exile

Nüket Esen

> There is a kind of writing where a person writes his own curriculum vitae *(tercüme-i hal)*, mixed with his memoirs, which the Europeans call autobiography; we can also call this a personal curriculum vitae. Actually, because in writing one's own curriculum vitae, one also writes his memoirs and observations about life, these works can be considered partial memoirs. In the Tanzimat period, Ahmet Midhat gave the only example of such a work, *Menfa*.[1]

This is what İsmail Habib Sevük, a famous Turkish literary historian, says in his book *Tanzimat'tan Beri Edebiyat Tarihi* (History of Literature since the Tanzimat), published in 1944. In the quotation above, he is talking about the famous Ottoman intellectual and novelist Ahmet Mithat's unfinished autobiography called *Menfa*, which means "the place of exile." As Sevük correctly points out, *Menfa*, first published in 1876, is the first Western style autobiography in Turkish literature. But even as late as 1944, Sevük was searching for a way to express and explain what autobiography was in Turkish because evidently, there were not many examples of autobiography written in Turkish.

One example of a Western autobiography that late nineteenth century Turkish intellectuals seemed to have been familiar with is *Confessions*, whose author, Jean Jacques Rousseau, was widely read. Although it never was published, *Confessions* was translated to Turkish by the famous poet Ziya Paşa (Sevük 1940: 132) and the manuscript of this translation might have circulated among the intellectuals of the time, including Ahmet Mithat. We also know that Ahmet Mithat spoke French and read a lot in French as he indicates in many of his own books. In his novel *Esrar-ı Cinayat* (Mystery of Murders), first published in 1884, Ahmet Mithat mentions Rousseau's *Confessions* (*İtirafat*) and criticizes it for having long discussions on everything that is stated in it and thus being too verbose. Since Ahmet Mithat has read it, he may have taken Rousseau's *Confessions* as an example for himself. In the first lines of *Menfa*, he discusses this book and says that he

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1 "Bir de kısmen 'Hâtırat'la karışık olarak bir kimsenin kendi tercüme-i halini bizzat kendisi yazması şekli vardır ki, frenkler buna autobiographie (otobiyografi) derler; buna 'Şahsî tercüme-i hal' diyebiliriz. Tabiî kendi şahsî tercüme-i halini anlatırken araya hâtıralar ve başka müşahedeler de girdiği için bu kısım eserler kısmen hâtırat sayılabilirler. Tanzimat devrinde bu tarz eserin tek nümunesini Ahmed Midhat Efendi verdi. Bunu Rodos'ta menfi iken *Menfa* isimle yazdı ve 1293 (1876)da kitap olarak neşretti" Sevük 1944: 187.

was not the first one in the world to write such a personal adventure book (*sergüzeştname*) and that there were many examples of such works, which indicates his awareness of autobiographical works in the West.

Menfa is not half as sophisticated as Rousseau's self-conscious *Confessions*, and the two texts furthermore differ greatly in terms of content. Where Rousseau tries to reveal the inner truths about himself in his autobiography, Ahmet Mithat mainly tries to reveal the political truths about himself. If there is self-reflection in an autobiography that memoirs lack,[2] then we can say that *Menfa* is an autobiography because here Ahmet Mithat tries to answer the questions, "Who am I?" and "Why did my life turn out to be what it is?" But it is obvious from what he says about Rousseau's *Confessions*, that for him an autobiography ought to reveal certain facts about a person's life without getting into any philosophical discussions about them.

Ahmet Mithat also seems to have been aware of the nineteenth century Western trends in autobiography because at the beginning of *Menfa*, he says that he may not be an important person, but that his experience in life is very important, especially for the young people of the age. He says, "My intention in writing this book is such that you need not worry about how important a person I am. My real aim is to give my friends an exemplary lesson, a warning about life."[3]

In the early nineteenth century, English autobiography writers were using terms like "useful and instructive" to present their work to their readers. Laura Marcus, in *Autobiographical Discourses*, says that these are "terms frequently employed by critics throughout the nineteenth century in arguing for the moral worth of autobiography" (Marcus 1994: 35). Ahmet Mithat emphasizes the moral worth of *Menfa* by repeating in a number of places in the book that what he is writing here as his life experience is exemplary and instructive for the people of his time.

Menfa consists of two distinct parts of equal length: first Ahmet Mithat's private life, childhood, and pains of growing up, and then his public life, and his exile to Rhodes. In relation to autobiography, Marcus says:

> The spatial metaphors of inside and outside which repeatedly appear in a range of critical discussions (about autobiography) are closely linked with oppositions between self and world, private and public, subjectivity and objectivity, the interior spaces of mind and personal being and the public world..." (Marcus 1994: 4).

In *Menfa*, both of these spaces are used. Ahmet Mithat talks about his personality and his childhood years which were spent in the Balkans and in Baghdad up

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2 For a discussion of the differences between autobiography and memoirs, see Marcus 1994: 6-9.

3 "Evvel emirde şurası malum olmalıdır ki bu sergüzeştnameyi yazmaktaki maksada göre benim kendi mahiyetimde bir ehemmiyet olup olmadığını taharri icab etmez. Maksad-ı asli ihvan-ı zamana bir numune-i ibret vermektir" Ahmet Mithat 2002: 15.

until 1871, when he finally settled in Istanbul. The second part of the autobiography deals with how he came to be sent to exile and the time he spent there.

Already at the beginning of *Menfa,* Ahmet Mithat makes a distinction between fiction and fact and places his autobiography in the second category. This seems to be a relevant concern on the part of the author because he has been publishing fiction up to that time and using the first person singular, the "I," in his narration. He says at the beginning of *Menfa*, while discussing fiction and fact:

> I shall not write the story of my life in the first way. That is, I shall not present my benefactors, my precious readers, with a novel in which I shall be the hero. I have already written novels to entertain my readers. As long as they are eager to read them, I shall, God willing, continue writing them. But here I intend to write my adventures in the second way. That is, this time I shall appear before my readers as I really am (Ahmet Mithat 2002: 13).

This insistence on the factuality of *Menfa* by Ahmet Mithat reminds one of what Laura Marcus puts forth in her book about Western literature. According to Marcus, the nineteenth century autobiography had to be redefined because "the fact that the eighteenth century novel usurps first person narrative and thus renders uncertain the authenticity of the autobiographical 'I,' and the distinction between autobiography and fiction" (Marcus 1994: 13-14).

Ahmet Mithat repeatedly assures the reader that what he is writing here is not fiction but fact. When telling about his childhood, he says that he was a stubborn and obnoxious child and that in his youth he would lose himself in extravagance and debauchery. He uses all these confessions to assure the reader that he is only telling the truth and nothing but the truth about his personality and his life, even if these truths were not something to be proud of. These assurances are used to prove that he is telling the truth in the second part of the autobiography, in which he talks about his political affiliations, or rather the lack of them.

Ahmet Mithat was exiled on the pretext of "provocative publication" along with writers who were affiliated with the Young Ottomans (*Yeni Osmanlılar*). The Young Ottomans were a group of young intellectuals who were against absolute monarchy and wanted to establish a constitutional monarchy in the empire. Most of them were the famous writers of the time. But the palace considered them revolutionaries. Five such writers were arrested and sent to exile at the same time. As well as Ahmet Mithat, the most prominent Young Ottoman, Namık Kemal, was among them.

In the second part of his autobiography, Ahmet Mithat separates himself from the Young Ottomans and their political views by saying that, although he liked the Young Ottomans when he was very young, he gradually came to see that their ideas were not timely because the Ottoman public had to be educated first, before dealing with any political changes in the country. In *Menfa*, Ahmet

Mithat emphasizes the importance of education for the Ottoman public and believes that political discussions and political changes should come after raising the consciousness and the intellectual level of the Ottoman people. He is for evolution, not revolution. In *Menfa*, in telling about his growing up and his development through education, he is actually reaccounting the evolution in his own life. So his textual choices are compatible with his ideological choices.

The prominent literary historian and novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar believes that this autobiography is "a kind of establishing one's position" for Ahmet Mithat (Tanpınar 1988: 451). After he has been sent to exile along with some Young Ottomans by Abdülaziz, in April 1873, and spent 38 months, that is three years and two months, in exile under governmental supervision in Rhodes, he is pardoned with the others in May 1876, when Abdülaziz is dethroned and Murat V comes to the throne.

Ahmet Mithat writes this autobiography in the summer of 1876, at the age of thirty, during the three-month reign of Murat V. He seems to look back on his past and re-evaluate it in order to determine where he stands politically after the exile. As Georges Gusdorf states in "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," "The man who recounts himself is himself searching his self through his history; he is not engaged in an objective disinterested pursuit but in a work of personal justification" (Gusdorf 1980: 39). In *Menfa*, Ahmet Mithat is trying to persuade the public that he never did anything to deserve a punishment like exile in the first place. He does not wish to be considered among the Young Ottomans just because he was sent to exile and pardoned at the same time with them. Gusdorf says that many autobiographies by public figures are written in order to clarify some misunderstanding about themselves (Gusdorf 1980: 36).

Ahmet Mithat underlines the fact that he is writing this book at a time when the Young Ottomans are seen in a much better light than before, that is, during the reign of Murat V, who was close to the Young Ottomans. So he insists that his opposition to the Young Ottoman ideas is not self-censorship, since he can now freely be on their side, if he wished, without any political repercussions. But in *Menfa*, it is obvious that he has not yet decided on a distinct political stance, as he praises Namık Kemal, the most important of the Young Ottomans, about whom he will write critically later. He only insists here that he does not agree with this group politically.

This unfinished autobiography ends in the middle of a sentence. Since at that time many books were published in parts, in fascicles, it seems that Ahmet Mithat stopped writing his autobiography when Abdülhamit II came to the throne at the beginning of September 1876. Ahmet Mithat may have stopped writing *Menfa* in order to start writing *Üss-i İnkılap* (The Basis of Revolution). After the enthronement of Abdülhamit, Ahmet Mithat will make his political choice swiftly and decide to stand on the side of the new sultan. The first volume of his two volume book, the infamous *Üss-i İnkılap* in which he praises Abdülhamit, is

published at the end of that year around the time when the first constitutional monarchy is established by Abdülhamit in December of 1876. Before the second volume of *Üss-i İnkılap* came out in the fall of 1877, Ahmet Mithat also published *Zübdetül Hakayık* (Essence of Reality) in the same year. These three books sealed the political choice of Ahmet Mithat as a supporter of Abdülhamit.

As Ahmet Mithat is writing *Menfa* in the summer of 1876 in Istanbul, Sultan Abdülhamit, his future affiliate, is not yet on the throne. Ahmet Mithat's political inclination begins to emerge in his autobiography, in which he seems to be taking the first steps and preparing the way to his final political stand which he will be held accountable for throughout his remaining life. In *Menfa* his political inclination is not yet that clear. But when Abdülhamit comes to the throne, Ahmet Mithat decides to make a clearer political statement with *Üss-i İnkılap* and leaves his *Menfa* unfinished.

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Relational Self-Narratives: Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's Autobiographical Writings

Halim Kara

> At the age of eighteen I was a rebellious anarchist. My greatest objective was to bring down any influential man or anyone occupying a high position. I also wanted to lead an uprising and incite the public to action like wind shivering a forest. At thirty, I had given up all this, did not believe in anything, and had abandoned myself to bodily pleasures. However, I awakened from this inflammation of flesh with a different kind of inflammation, that of the soul. A mystical longing wrapped around my heart like a flame of fire. With the growth of this flame I was coming to life and filling my tepid solitude with ghosts whose faces remind one of clear spring waters. So from this I reached the love of nation and I felt a passionate obligation to give my life for that path of love. Yet in this new religion I was still my own prophet. For this reason, my soul was as disordered as a community without an imam. It was when I heard His [Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's] voice from beyond the Anatolian highlands that I knew the difference between light and fire, ecstasy and fever. It was only under the command of this nation's guide that I was saved from being burned needlessly by unproductive flame and from exhausting convulsion in vain. Right away my soul entered into what I would call a divine order.
>
> Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Ergenekon*

Introduction

This study analyzes the autobiographical writings of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889-1974),[1] one of the leading figures of modern Turkish literature, employing a relational notion of self-representations in autobiography. Yakup Kadri actively participated in the cultural, social, and political events of the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Like many members of his generation, he was also an active figure in the foundation of the new Turkish Republic and an advocate of Mustafa Kemal's social, cultural, and political reforms. Accordingly, Yakup Kadri's memoirs tell the story of his past life in connection with his family, generation, nation, and history. As will be argued throughout this paper, Yakup Kadri's individuation process is actually constructed through his relation to "privileged" and

[1] For a more comprehensive study of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's life and literary works see Akı 2001, Aktaş 1987, and Yücel 1989. In addition, some aspects of Yakup Kadri's memoirs have been examined by İnci Enginün and Sema Uğurcan. While Enginün discusses the memoirs in the context of the literature of the Turkish War of Independence, Uğurcan examines them in connection with Yakup Kadri's prose fiction. See, for example, Enginün 1991: 109-119 and Uğurcan 1989: 205-218.

"significant" others, including his mother, father, friends, and intellectuals and political leaders of the time. In this regard, this study relies on the notion that the individuation process in autobiographical writings does not necessarily always occur in isolation, as argued by some critics, but rather in relation to, and in association with, others. This approach springs from the idea that, as a socially and historically produced cultural entity, the construction of the "self" in autobiographical writings is contextual and discursive, because "autobiographical narrators come to consciousness of who they are, of what identifications and differences they are assigned or what identities they might adopt, through the discourses that surround them."[2]

In approaching Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings, the study will rely primarily on the notion of autobiographical *relationality* put forward by such theorists and critics as Paul Eakin, Nancy K. Miller, Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson. Challenging the conventional idea of an individualistic, unified, and autonomous self portrayed in autobiography, which dominated auto-biographical studies until the early 1980s,[3] these theorists have argued that both identity and selfhood are relational despite differences in societies and cultures. Recent developments in literary studies and critical theory, such as postmodernism, feminism, post-colonialism and post-structuralism, have played a particularly significant role in current modes of autobiographical studies. The feminist, postmodern, and post-colonial critique of Enlightenment ideology and its values, including the individualistic subject, prepared the way for the emergence of a relational understanding of the autobiographical self. Gender-oriented discussions in literary criticism have been especially important to this development by warning against the danger of a universalizing maleness in literary studies. Writing in 1988, Susan S. Friedman criticized Gusdorf and others for failing to understand that "the self, self-creation, and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities, and many other non-Western peoples." This is because, she maintained, "individualistic paradigms of the self ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process of women and minorities." [4]

This relational understanding of selfhood, initially conceived as the major characteristic of autobiographical writing of women and minorities, has gradually led the way for the idea of relational self-representation beyond ethnic and gender lines. Accordingly, all selfhood in autobiographical narratives began to be considered relational "despite differences that fall out along gender lines," imply-

2 Smith and Watson 2001: 34.

3 Until the early 1980s, Georges Gusdorf and Philippe Lejeune's concept of autobiography dominated critiques of autobiographical writings. Both critics and their followers related the rise of modern autobiography to Enlightenment individualism, stressing the idea of autonomous and unique selfhood portrayed in autobiography. See, Gusdorf 1980: 28-48 and Lejeune 1989.

4 See Friedman 1998: 72-82 and Miller 1980: 258-73.

ing that both female and male autobiographical practices constitute similar patterns.[5] Nancy K. Miller explains this by asserting that self-portrayal in male-authored autobiographical writings is constructed through the relation to privileged others that also characterizes female-authored autobiography.[6] These privileged others include family members (mostly mothers and fathers), friends, colleagues, and the identifiable figures of a collective past such as political leaders. It is through these others that the autobiographical subject's social and collective formation or understanding takes place, because "autobiographical subjects know themselves as subjects of particular kinds of experience attached to their social status and identities." They also "make themselves known by acts of identification, and by implication, differentiation in the world they live."[7]

Using the notion of relational selfhood briefly discussed above, this paper will argue that in his autobiographical writings, Yakup Kadri conceives identity as relational and the autobiographical narratives he produces are also relational, because the story of his family, generation, and other privileged ones, provides the key to his own individual identity and character. It will convey that Yakup Kadri's self-identity is developed through linking the story of himself with that of his family, generation, and nation, and that he reveals the processes of his identity formation by placing himself not only as a witness to the story of his family and the events of modern Turkish history, but also as one of the main actors of the Turkish nationalist resistance against foreign occupation. The paper will also show that in telling the story of others, Yakup Kadri reflects his own personality and character, especially by comparing and contrasting character and ideological differences between himself and others.

Generally speaking, in terms of their main focus and differences in constructing the self, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical memoirs can be divided into three periods: his childhood, the Second Constitutional Period, and World War I (1908-1919), where he records the social, political, and cultural events of Ottoman Turkish society, and finally, his memoirs that deal with the Turkish National Struggle and the foundation of the new republic (1919-1923). His life narratives depict the gradual intellectual and ideological formation and maturation of his sense of self through his education, reading, and encounters with the social and political situations of the time, which is a reflection of the Western autobiography tradition. However, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings fundamentally differ from conventional Western autobiography in constructing self-identity by insisting on a relational, rather than an isolationist, notion of the individuation process as argued throughout this study.

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5 Eakin 1999: 50.
6 Miller 1994: 3.
7 Ibid.: 27 and 32.

First Period

*Anamın Kitabı (*My Mother's Book*)*, a memoir going into the depths of Yakup Kadri's early selfhood, focuses mainly on his early childhood and youth. In the preface, the author asserts that he wrote this memoir to challenge the idea that childhood is the happiest time in one's life. This memoir tells the story of Yakup Kadri's birth, genealogy, geographic origins, schooling, parents, the literary works he read or studied as a young boy, and the social environment in Egypt, Manisa, and Izmir. It recounts his life by presenting it not in a chronological order, but rather through a general overview describing various fragmented aspects of his childhood. The memoir describes the unhappy, alienated, reserved, shy, and well-behaved young Yakup Kadri, his relationship with his father and mother, his upper-class family, their luxurious lifestyle in Egypt, and the tragic economic and social collapse that would follow. It thus offers a detailed account of his early character formation and personality through significant others and his social environment.

Yakup Kadri's father and mother are portrayed as the key significant others in *Anamın Kitabı*, in which the author attempts to create a binary opposition between the two. While his father is represented as an ordinary and simple provincial man with various physical and mental health problems in spite of his prominent family background, his mother is portrayed as a proud, elegant, royal, and angelic lady, whom Yakup Kadri simply adores. In doing so, Yakup Kadri closely associates himself with his mother and her family while distancing himself from his father and his family, which, according to the author, had fallen on hard times as a result of its recent economic and social decline.

Even though the memoir is entitled *Anamın Kitabı*, it begins with a description of the relationship between Yakup Kadri and his father. In fact, the first section of the book, entitled "Relations with my father were not pleasant" *(Babamla aram hoş değildi)*,[8] is essentially devoted to describing why the author did not get along with his father, Abdülkadir Bey, by depicting the physical and psychological state of his father until his death. First of all, Yakup Kadri's father both in terms of his physical appearance and character did not meet the requirements of an ideal father figure in the mind of the author. Recalling his childhood impressions of his father, Yakup Kadri writes that there was nothing about his father that was pleasant or likeable, and he disliked everything about his father, including his name, appearance, disposition, and speaking manner. According to Yakup Kadri, his father "was a plump and round-bearded man with a round and bald

8 Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 17. This book was first published in 1957. Also, note that while Yakup Kadri gives a detailed description of his father's physical appearance and personality, he does not say a lot about his mother. In fact, his mother usually appears in connection with his father, the family, or the author himself and the reader is not told either her name or what she looks like.

head." Because of his discontent with his father, these three physical attributes were the exact opposites of what Yakup Kadri hoped to be; he desired to become a tall, "well-proportioned young man with a thin curling moustache."[9]

Furthermore, Yakup Kadri was especially displeased with his father's heavy local dialect. Even though he belonged to a wealthy and prominent family, because of his provincial upbringing, Abdülkadir Bey, according to the narrator, did not pronounce some Turkish words properly. For example, he used dialect words like, *ürüzgar* (wind), *hincik* (now), and *gadın* or *garı* (woman), instead of the standard *rüzgar*, *şimdi* and *kadın* respectively. The child Yakup Kadri was embarrassed by this because he considered the use of these dialect words as insulting his mother, who was raised in the palace of governor İsmail Pasha in Egypt.[10] Yakup Kadri makes it clear that his father lacked the characteristics of a gentleman that fit the profile of his family, especially Yakup Kadri's mother's upper-class background and elegancy.[11]

Yakup Kadri was also puzzled by the unconditional devotion, submission, and dedication of his mother to someone as unworthy as his father. This is not only because his father was a common and simple man, but he was also always inappreciative of and disrespectful to his wife. Yakup Kadri's mother's rather extreme pride and devotion to her husband and family led her not only to try and hide her husband's mental ailments from others, but also to sell off her family heirlooms and jewelry to cover the household expenses her husband could no longer provide. It is this unconditional sacrifice and devotion that clearly invoked deep admiration and affection in Yakup Kadri for his mother. According to Yakup Kadri, his father often treated his mother like an old veteran nanny of the household.[12] Yakup Kadri even caught Abdülkadir Bey cheating on his wife with another woman, which appears to have left Yakup Kadri with a permanent and unforgettable sense of betrayal towards his father. A vivid and detailed description of this incident in the memoir is a clear indication of the lasting impact it had on the author.[13]

However, despite his overall negative representation of his father, Yakup Kadri also makes an attempt to show both a connection to and compassion for his father once he had been alienated from his family and friends due to his failing health. As time went on, Abdülkadir Bey essentially lost touch with the outside world and began to live in a world of "imagination" and "illusion." He devoted himself entirely to religion and praying, and even began to tell Yakup Kadri and

9 Ibid., 18.
10 Ibid.
11 Ironically, speaking of his Anatolian upbringing and its persistent influence on his later life, Yakup Kadri states that there was very little difference between his accent and the accent of his father. See Akı 2001: 16.
12 Ibid., 18-19.
13 Ibid., 22-24.

his sister some "miraculous" religious tales. While finding these stories "childish" and "ridiculous," Yakup Kadri still did not want to believe that his father had become such an ignorant and simple minded man in light of the fact that his library was filled with literary books both in Turkish and French.[14]

Yakup Kadri is especially critical of those who severed their relationships with his father when his physical and psychological illness worsened, just before his death. The connection to his father is also evident in the aftermath of his father's death when Yakup Kadri underwent a process of fundamental emotional and character transformation. Although he attempts to deny a connection between his father's death and his changing character, Yakup Kadri regards the time around his father's death as a significant turning point in his life, stating that during this period he in a way possessed a double personality: The shy, easygoing, and introverted boy versus the naughty, sneaky hooligan. Yakup Kadri articulates that these two personalities were constantly in competition with each other. As a result of this character transformation, Yakup Kadri, who was bullied by children in the town, began to bully and beat other kids. Only after his mother stopped speaking to him for a long time and he realized that this was actually upsetting her did Yakup Kadri change his behavior to try to make up with her.[15]

Despite Yakup Kadri's denial of a direct connection between the changing of his character and his father's death, his showing sympathy towards his father's alienation and his undergoing such a mental transformation following his father's death, can be read as an attempt to make peace with his past so that he can associate himself with it. Furthermore, these accounts about Yakup Kadri's father can be regarded as a confession of embarrassment for being a son of such a father, and also his guilt for feeling such embarrassment. This is why he later attempts to free his father from being a completely negative figure in his life. As a result, even though Yakup Kadri's childhood stories regarding his father focus essentially on negative recollections, they can still be considered positive, because he tries to link his present self-identity to this memory of his childhood and family's past.

As he does with his mother and father, Yakup Kadri attempts to create a binary opposition between his family and the general public in Manisa by describing the unclean, poor, and disordered aspects of the town in opposition to the clean, rich, colorful, luxurious, and aristocratic lifestyle of his family's past in Egypt. This is evident in the narrator's reflection on his own feelings vis-à-vis other children in the town, his general impression of Manisa, and his mother's stories regarding her first arrival there. Recalling his teachers, school, and classmates in Manisa, Yakup Kadri asserts that the dirty and unclean school environment, including the disgusting and unhygienic cafeteria, made him suffer more than the displeased face of his teacher or the principle's stick.[16] In such an un-

14 Ibid., 61-64 and 74-77.
15 Ibid., 87-89.
16 Ibid., 29-30.

friendly and frightening environment, some students used to bully him and take his lunch bag away. According to Yakup Kadri, this bullying occurred not because he was afraid of those students, but because he was too shy, proud, and polite to deal with them:

> I was not only a well-behaved and timid child; I was at the same time an extremely shy child. First of all, swearing and fighting seemed shameful to me and my pride would not allow me to be together with those who acted in such shameful ways.[17]

Instead of fighting back, the young Yakup Kadri backed away from them and silently cried. In such an unclean, inhospitable, and unfamiliar environment, the reader finds the alienated, shy, and introverted Yakup Kadri feeling constant nostalgia for his happy days and old palace lifestyle in Egypt, and contrasting his happy days in Egypt with his difficult days in Manisa. For instance, he remembers how he and his sister used to cry silently about their current difficult conditions in Manisa, recalling their extravagant house with its garden, where they were spoiled and treated so well. He recalls how they were served and dressed, taken to their mother by their friendly nannies, and then had their well-prepared breakfast. He also talks about happy days spent at amusement parks with his father, who bought them expensive toys.[18]

Describing life in the palace in Egypt as being like a fairytale, Yakup Kadri's mother used to tell her two children about the royal parties, balls, and operas she attended and the fancy clothes she used to wear to these social occasions. These stories had a profound impact on Yakup Kadri for he also remembered various parts of the palace. In addition, there were a number of framed pictures of royal relatives around the house who still sent them letters from Egypt.[19] Thus the faces, clothes, voices, and movements of noble people continued to echo in the minds of Yakup Kadri and the family, deepening their nostalgia and admiration for their glorious and colorful lost lifestyle and persistently reminding the young boy of the sharp contrast between the two social environments of his childhood past and present.

Yakup Kadri's reflection of their aristocratic life in Egypt, in comparison to Manisa, illustrates the family's struggle to grow accustomed to living under difficult conditions and establish a connection with the general public. It also shows that class differences greatly contributed to Yakup Kadri's failure to establish a relationship with other children in Manisa. Like within his family, outside the family others played a double role in constructing his self-identity. While his family is conceived as something to closely identify with, others outside his family are perceived as something to disassociate himself from. It is in this way that Yakup Kadri attempts to define his self-formation during his childhood.

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17 Ibid., 31.
18 Ibid., 20.
19 Ibid., 115-117.

Second Period

Covering the years of 1908 and 1916 in his autobiographical narratives, Yakup Kadri depicts the second period of his life as an individualistic, cosmopolitan, degenerative, and bohemian time. He closely connects his identity to that of others by relating his own life narrative to that of his generation and society and criticizing both his and his contemporaries' attitudes.[20] Here, Yakup Kadri constructs himself as someone who was a pessimist and indifferent to the political, social, and cultural issues facing his society, worrying rather about individual literary accomplishments and intellectual development:

> At the age of eighteen I was a rebellious anarchist. My greatest objective was to bring down any influential man or anyone occupying a high position. I also wanted to lead an uprising and incite the public to action like wind shivering a forest. At thirty, I had given up all this, did not believe in anything, and had abandoned myself into bodily pleasures. However, I awakened from this inflammation of flesh with a different kind of inflammation, that of the soul. A mystical longing wrapped around my heart like a flame of fire. With the growth of this flame I was coming to life and filling my tepid solitude with ghosts whose faces remind one of clear spring waters.[21]

In his autobiographical narratives, Yakup Kadri considers this tendency to be a general characteristic of his generation and social environment. Pointing out that during that period the youth did not "believe in anything or anybody anymore," he emphasizes the fact that his generation was enmeshed in the political and social polarization, confusion, disbelief, and disappointment that dominated the whole of Turkish society. More particularly, the political leaders and statesmen were in competition with each other to gain power for their own benefit or personal reputation, rather than to bring about social and political change in society. Yakup Kadri explains that the end of the nineteenth century was a period of grand disbelief, scepticism, and disassociation in Europe, which ultimately led the young generation to alienate themselves from the social and political crises of the time:

> As in our individual lives, we had become completely suspicious about issues facing our people and country. And we were trying to insert this collapse of soul and faith into some kind of scientific and ideological system with the help of a few foreign books.[22]

Yakup Kadri points his criticism specifically towards two literary trends of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, namely *Servet-i Fünun* (Wealth of Sciences) and *Fecr-i Ati* (Future Down). The poets and writers of the

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20 It is important to note that Yakup Kadri continued to adopt a similar critical attitude towards some of his contemporaries, like Ali Kemal and Cenap Şahabettin, who wrote daily columns in opposition to the Turkish nationalist resistance movement in Anatolia after the World War I.

21 Karaosmanoğlu 1964: 227.

22 Karaosmanoğlu 1961: 12.

these literary currents produced creative works in accordance with the ideas "art for art's sake" and "art is personal and respectable," regarding literature and arts as inherently admirable, beautiful, and valuable manifestations of human creativity and intelligence from which individuals acquire intellectual and emotional pleasure and thus essentially remain indifferent to the political and social crises of the time. At that time, Yakup Kadri was also a member of the *Fecr-i Ati* literary group and a devoted admirer and follower of the leading figures of these literary movements. Writing in 1933, Yakup Kadri recalls the invitation of a friend, Şahabettin Süleyman, to join the *Fecr-i Ati* literary society with a group of some of the most famous writers of the time. Excited and shocked by the invitation, Yakup Kadri accepted. They gathered in a small room, where the name (*Fecr-i Ati*) and the slogan ("Art is personal and respectable") of the society were decided upon after long debates. The impact of these discussions on the young Yakup Kadri was remarkable:

> "Art is personal and respectable! I returned home repeating this sentence a hundred times, memorizing it within me like a prayer. "Art is personal and respectable!" And fate required that I should have to defend this great, this sacred ideology against a number of unaware people right from the first step of the Fecr-i Ati.[23]

Yakup Kadri concludes that this "enthusiasm" and "foolhardiness" for this concept of art and literature continued until the Balkan War, which marked the beginning of his transition to a new ideology, Turkish patriotism and nationalism. According to the author, in the following years, although he continued to regard art and literature as admirable and personal, he also began to think that there could be some things that were more important and things that were not so "personal" and "respectable."[24]

During the second period, of which he would become critical in later years, he closely associated himself with his generation, the general tendency of which was to be alienated, individualistic, and pessimistic. Only rarely does he reflect on his personality separately when he attempts to describe the differences in outlook and character between himself and his friends. For example, on one occasion he contrasts his psychological and mental disposition with that of his good friend Refik Halit Karay by asserting that while he himself was a man of letters and generally pessimistic and spiritual in nature, his friend was more optimistic, realistic, and worldly. Yakup Kadri's objective here is to demonstrate that despite these differences, both acted together in cultural and literary circles.[25]

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23 Yakup Kadri 1933: 25.

24 Ibid.: 26.

25 Karaosmanoğlu 1969: 68-69. It was also during this period of ideological and personal crisis that Yakup Kadri briefly became interested in classical Greco-Latin literature and Sufism and its mystical teachings before becoming a nationalist writer.

Third Period

As mentioned earlier, the Balkan War marked the beginning of Yakup Kadri's break with individualism and his interest in social issues facing Ottoman Turkish society. Accordingly, starting at around the end of World War I, he began to associate himself with the Turkish nationalist resistance movement in Anatolia under Mustafa Kemal's leadership. Initially, in Istanbul, he wrote daily columns in the influential newspaper *İkdam* supporting the nascent movement. Later, he accompanied Halide Edip Adıvar to Anatolia as a journalist to report from the various fronts, describing tragic aspects of the war, and its impact on the Anatolian people. His memoirs show his ideological transformation from individualism and cosmopolitanism to Turkish nationalism around this time. Reflecting on this transition, Yakup Kadri writes:

> Finally the years 1914-1918 came. The wolf flocks of Western imperialism that had become crazy with blood and looting violently attacked our poor sheep-pens. And no traces of literary societies and sacred ideas of art were left out. At that moment, I realized with bitter clarity that art, for whose sake I had poured forth much sweat, is first the property of a society and a nation. In addition, it is, after all, the expression of a period. Isolated from these qualities, art has neither meaning nor value. Sovereign art could exist only in a sovereign nation.[26]

Yakup Kadri further states that the recent political events, meaning World War I and the Turkish War of Independence, clearly denied the idea of art as "personal" and "respectable," which he had earlier supported.

In his autobiographical writings, Yakup Kadri constructs the third period in direct opposition to the previous one by closely linking his representation of self with the history of his nation. Because of his new-found commitment to the Turkish nationalist struggle, he begins to construe his earlier life as a chronological narrative of ideological errors and self-indulgence.

Broadly speaking, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings describing this period have two significant functions: First, through telling the history of the emergence of the modern Turkish nation, he constructs himself as one of the main figures and agents of the Turkish nationalist movement, and his contributions to the daily newspapers in Istanbul supporting the Anatolian movement was a manifestation of this. He represents himself as an intellectual innovator, a defender of his nation, and a writer of modern Turkish history. Second, by situating himself as a narrator of such great political events of the Turkish past, he becomes an autobiographical subject who makes these historical events memorable and vivid in the present time. By doing this, he actually underscores his own self-identity, because his writings are concerned with the expression of his own

26 Yakup Kadri 1933: 26.

particular experience during the time of a collective struggle, although his personality and personal life are fundamentally missing in these narratives.

As stated above, these autobiographical narratives of the third period basically portray the emergence and development of the Turkish nationalist resistance in Anatolia after World War I and the events surroundings the Turkish War of Independence between 1919 and 1923. The general characteristics of the autobiographical writings of Yakup Kadri during this period show great differences from the second period: Pessimism is replaced by optimism despite social and political hardship, and there is a rejection of individualism and cosmopolitanism, an ultimate belief in the leader and the people, a growing anti-imperialist sentiment, and an attempt by Yakup Kadri to connect with the people to overcome his feelings of alienation. In this regard, Yakup Kadri's memoir *Vatan Yolunda: Milli Mücadele Hatıraları* (On the Road to Homeland: Memoirs of the National Struggle), originally published in 1958, occupies a vital place. Throughout the book, the reader encounters the idealization of the Turkish War of Independence and its leadership, symbolized in the personality of Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the movement and the founder of modern Turkey.

In the preface to *Vatan Yolunda*, in discussing the reasons behind the publication of his book, Yakup Kadri remarks that people who have written their memoirs on the events of the Turkish nationalist struggle have often had various political or personal agendas. While some have aimed to tell their personal heroic stories to show their profound contribution to this event and to promote their credibility in society by intimately connecting themselves with Mustafa Kemal, others have sought to claim that they were one of the very first instigators of this resistance movement. On this point, he further adds that some authors have even gone so far as to claim that the Turkish national movement should be attributed to the rise of regional militia resistance movements, and not to Mustafa Kemal's landing at Samsun in May 1919.[27]

In Yakup Kadri's view, approaching the nationalist struggle as an individualist effort makes it difficult to discuss it as a collective national movement, because it loses its prominence and meaning in the eyes of the public and turns into a collection of autobiographical or monographic works.[28] He thus implies that such individualist concerns have undermined the spirit, excitement, and enthusiasm behind the Turkish nationalist struggle. By looking at the nationalist struggle as a collective experience, Yakup Kadri depicts the heroism of the Turkish people and

[27] Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 13. Also note that although Yakup Kadri acknowledges the presence of regional resistance movements before Mustafa Kemal's arrival to Anatolia, he adopts a very critical approach to these movements, as most of them gradually began to be destructive rather than beneficial to the organized resistance movement due to their lack of discipline and organization and potentially rebellious brigand leaders. For this reason, Mustafa Kemal disbanded these movements shortly after the establishment of an organized army.

[28] Ibid.: 14.

their leader, Mustafa Kemal, in the Turkish War of Independence. Therefore, despite his claims of objectivity in accounting the events surrounding this period, idealism and emotion dominate the pages of this memoir. In fact, the memoir gradually turns into an historical epic with Mustafa Kemal as its hero, who accomplished the impossible by successfully leading his people to sovereignty and by creating a new modern nation from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Through his accounts of the events of this period, Yakup Kadri attempts to reawaken the spirit and idealism of the Turkish people's struggle to independence and revive their lost memory.

When the Turkish national movement started under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, Yakup Kadri was in Switzerland getting treatment for his health problems. He thus begins *Vatan Yolunda* by providing a general overview of the perception of some Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals towards the resistance movement in Anatolia. Here Yakup Kadri creates a binary opposition between the supporters and dissenters of the movement. He even goes so far as to consider the dissenters enemies and traitors of the nationalist cause. Regarding any opposition to the Anatolian movement as an attempt to undermine the national resistance, he sharply criticizes those who were still loyal to the Sultan and who sought the protection of Britain or America to preserve the Ottoman Empire.

To explain his views of this group of people, Yakup Kadri quotes a daily column he wrote in 1920 that promoted the national cause among the general public. In this column, he attempted to draw the attention of the reader to the mentality of pessimism and despair among intellectuals during the time of war. He considered pessimism *(bedbinlik)* and despair dangerous for the well-being of the general public, stressing that especially during times of crises pessimism was a sign of "defeatism" *(hezimetçilik)* and "unreliability" *(mızıkçılık)* or was a sort of "unconscious treachery" *(şuursuz hainlik)*. This was because, in Yakup Kadri's view, the damage caused by people with these attitudes in a society was much more than any external enemy. For Yakup Kadri, these people are "brainless friends" *(akılsız dostlar)* who unintentionally give away the fortress from inside and make you miss your "wise enemies" *(akıllı düşmanlar)*.[29] According to the author, in addition to their pessimism and despair about the current condition of society, these intellectuals and statesmen failed to understand the "vicious" motives and "hypocrisy" of the Triple Entente nations, who were on the whole the enemy of the Turks and whose main objective was to wipe out the Turkish people from world history.[30] These Ottoman leaders still believed in negotiating with Westerners in order to preserve the Empire under a Western mandate.[31] By

29 Ibid.: 53-54.

30 Ibid.: 23-28.

31 As mentioned earlier, a similar view is also evident in Yakup Kadri's relationship with his literary contemporaries who were said to write against the national struggle in Anatolia.

negatively judging these so-called cosmopolitan and liberal statesmen and intellectuals, Yakup Kadri defines his relationship with them in accordance with their attitude toward the Anatolian movement,[32] creating the Other of himself and the advocators of the national resistance and constructing an identity for himself as separate from these dissenters.

In addition, Yakup Kadri briefly depicts European attitudes towards the Turkish people and the nationalist resistance movement in *Vatan Yolunda*. European media, for example, not only underestimated the injustices and oppression the Turks faced by those European nations victorious in World War I, but also made life more difficult for Turks in exile by provoking the European public against them.[33] This greatly contributed to Yakup Kadri's questioning in his memoir of major European ideas, like humanity, justice, and civilization.[34] Portraying Europeans as civilized and technologically advanced, but at the same time "vicious" and "hypocritical," Yakup Kadri sharply criticizes the broader aggressive policies of these countries, which he felt aimed to destroy the Turkish nation's existence in history. The occupation of Istanbul and Izmir by French and British forces encouraged Yakup Kadri's anti-imperialist and nationalist sentiments and ideas. For example, he describes the mistreatment of the Turkish people by their foreign occupiers upon his return to Istanbul from Switzerland as comparable to that of the Untouchables of India under British colonial rule. Although here Yakup Kadri fundamentally talks about external events, we see radical changes in the way he perceives his self-identity. He associates his individual life with the pains and subjugation of his people under foreign domination.

Yakup Kadri's construction of Europeans and local opponents of the national resistance movement as the Other has significant implications regarding the relationship between national identity and his autobiographical writing. More specifically, his portrayal of Europeans as "imperialists" and native opponents as "collaborators" can be read as an important discursive means for the author to construct Turkish national identity vis-à-vis European nations and Ottoman identity. This is because he regards his autobiographical narrative as a vehicle through which Turkish people and their leadership laid claim to an identity different from that of the Ottomans and Europeans. By generating a sense of solidarity and communal self-awareness among the peoples of Turkey based on a distinct historical experience, Europeans and opponents of the Turkish nationalist movement are constructed in this memoir as the Other of this movement and its leader, whose ultimate determination and resilience resulted in the birth of the modern Turkish nation. This is relevant to major contemporary theories of

These views are expressed in the related pages of Yakup Kadri's *Gençlik ve Edebiyat Hatıraları*. See Karaosmanoğlu 1969.

32 Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 19-34.

33 Ibid.: 23.

34 Ibid.: 27.

nationalism, according to which different communities of people create narratives about their existence on distinct collectivities, cultures, and histories.[35] In a similar way, Yakup Kadri produces national narratives that are founded upon the discourse of others, employing his autobiographical writing as a discursive strategy for advocating Turkish national identity by locating his nation in direct opposition to Europeans and the Ottomans.

In opposition to his negative portrayal of some Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen and Europeans, Yakup Kadri idealizes the military and political leadership of Mustafa Kemal in *Vatan Yolunda* by closely linking his own personal identity with that of Mustafa Kemal. From the beginning of the national struggle to the end, through descriptions of his military heroism in various fronts during World War I and the Turkish War of Independence and his political genius, Mustafa Kemal is regarded as a person who possessed all the qualifications, charisma, intellectuality, and character to be a legitimate leader of the Turkish people and nation. Describing their first encounter in Ankara, Yakup Kadri compares Mustafa Kemal's face to an old medallion. He further explains that even though his face had the impression of someone who worked, thought hard, and saw hard times, there was no sign of exhaustion. According to the author, Mustafa Kemal understood what the people wanted and needed.[36] The encounter with him in Ankara deepened Yakup Kadri's respect and admiration for Mustafa Kemal, to whom he was bound emotionally and ideologically during his lifetime.

By presenting Mustafa Kemal as the undisputed leader who successfully led his people to victory and complete independence under very hard social and political conditions, Yakup Kadri situates his narrative in direct contrast to the oppositional autobiographical narratives produced by the political opponents of Mustafa Kemal in response to *Nutuk* (Speech), a report delivered by him before the congress of the Republican People's Party in 1927. In *Nutuk*, which has become the essential source for almost all Turkish historiography on this period and describes the events of the Turkish War of Independence between 1919 and 1922 under his military and political leadership, Mustafa Kemal undermines the roles of other leaders in the war and foundation of modern Turkey and defends his reforms and policies in the early years of the Republic. After the delivery of *Nutuk*, former war-time comrades who had become political opponents of Mustafa Kemal wrote life narratives about the military and political events of the same period to defend themselves against Mustafa Kemal's arguments in his speech.[37]

Writing essentially within Turkish official ideology and historiography, Yakup Kadri constructs his self-identity in direct conjunction with the author of *Nutuk,*

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35 See, for example, Anderson 1991 and Smith 1991.

36 Karaosmanoğlu 1999: 120.

37 Adak, Hülya 2003: 509-10. See also the whole of this work and her article, "Who is afraid of Dr. Rıza Nur's Autobiography?" in this collection for a more detailed examination of *Nutuk* in comparison to these oppositional life narratives.

as both texts illustrate profound thematic and structural similarities in describing the events of this period. Although Yakup Kadri's memoir ends with the liberation of Izmir from the Greeks in September 1922 and *Nutuk* goes beyond this date to briefly describe the internal political dispute among the leaders of the early Republic up to 1927, both texts adopt almost the same approach to the military and political events of the Turkish national movement from 1919 to 1922.[38] In fact, in many ways *Vatan Yolunda* directly coincides with *Nutuk* in depicting the emergence of the nationalist resistance movement and its development through the regional congresses in Anatolia, and in representing Mustafa Kemal as the sole military and political leader of this movement from its beginning to its end. This is especially evident in Yakup Kadri's frequent citations from *Nutuk* to back up his narrative and validate his claims about this period. By using the authority of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and *Nutuk* in this way, he attempts to convince the reader that it is his version of the story that should be accepted as the accurate account of the Turkish national struggle. Therefore, while endorsing Mustafa Kemal's leadership in this movement and defending his claims expressed in *Nutuk*, Yakup Kadri also attempts to secure a position in modern Turkish history as an important ally of Mustafa Kemal and an agent of the Turkish nationalist struggle by constructing himself as a subject who is centered in the public as both an evaluator and actor of this common history. He thus negotiates his position in his relationship to the other significant figures of the time, including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, by inserting his own history into the history of modern Turkey. He appears to be well aware that through his autobiographical writings, the political, social, and cultural contexts of modern Turkey become vivid and memorable. In short, in this context, Yakup Kadri's autobiographical narrative, *Vatan Yolunda*, indicates multiple rhetorical functions: As a life narrator, although his life narratives offer subjective truth about a particular time, Yakup Kadri is also making "history" in a sense by enshrining a community and contributing to writing modern Turkish historiography. He also justifies his own perception, upholds his reputation, disputes the accounts of others, conveys cultural information, and invents a desirable future for his nation.[39]

Conclusion

As shown throughout this study, Yakup Kadri constantly positions his individual identity in relation to others by association with them or disassociation from them, whether they are family members, colleagues, or leaders. As argued by Smith and Watson:

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38 In another memoir, *Politikada 45 Yıl* (45 Years in Politics), Yakup Kadri deals with the political events of the early republic. Here, too, he closely allies himself with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reforms and policies. See Karaosmanoğlu 1968: 29-143.

39 Smith and Watson 2001: 10.

> Autobiographies often incorporate several models of identity in succession or in alternation to tell a story of serial development. Sometimes these models of identities are conflictual. Sometimes narrators explicitly resist certain identities. Sometimes they obsessively work to confirm their self-representation to particular identity frames.[40]

In his autobiographical writings, Yakup Kadri's self-identity shifts with social and political conditions in different times and environments. As a young boy, he resists associating his self-formation with his father within the family and the town people outside the family, while closely identifying himself with his mother and her royal family. Also, he occasionally constructs his self-identity in opposition to his earlier characteristics as in the case of the pessimism and individualism of the second period in contrast to the optimism and nationalism of the third. This reflects not only the multiple and dynamic nature of Yakup Kadri's personality but also the relational aspect of his self-formation. This is because, as a product of a particular time and place, his "self" is formed in different identity-shaping social, political, and cultural environments.

In approaching Yakup Kadri's autobiographical writings from a relational perspective, one can see that speaking through others, he actually not only tells the story of an individual as a part of a family, generation, and nation, but also constructs a "self" that is separate from them. Whatever motives Yakup Kadri had to produce his autobiographical writings, it is the narration of a particular person's experience that is the center of these narratives. Therefore, it is difficult to say that Yakup Kadri insists that his narratives are only the history of his people rather than the story of his individual life. In addition, the literary creation and representation of his particular experiences permit him to assert some degree of autonomy from his people, family, and generation by constructing himself in association with and in opposition to others. For example, in his memoirs of his childhood and youth, when he describes the history of his family and his relationship with his parents, and when he represents the character of his friends and his relationships with them, he is at the same time also separating himself from them by narrating through others. Thus, his autobiography can be regarded not simply as a story of an individual who is part of a family, generation, or nation, but also as a construction of self through relational autobiographical writing.

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Who is Afraid of Dr. Riza Nur's Autobiography?

Hülya Adak

Ottoman Sufi diaries of the late seventeenth century illustrate the prevalence of early examples of autobiographical writings in the Ottoman context, but autobiographical writings mostly proliferated in the nineteenth century, among which Ahmet Midhat's *Menfa* (Memoirs in Exile) and his experimental auto/biography *Fatma Aliye Hanım yahut Bir Muharrire-i Osmaniyenin Neşeti* (Fatma Aliye, or the Birth of an Ottoman Woman Writer), and Midhat Paşa's *Hatıralar* (Memoirs) can be included. Autobiographical novels, starting from Halide Edib's *Raik'in Annesi* (Raik's Mother) and *Handan* to more recent examples such as Latife Tekin's *Gece Dersleri* (Nocturnal Lessons); Orhan Pamuk's recent ph-autobiography, *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir* (Istanbul: Memoirs and the City), and a plethora of political and military memoirs, such as Ali Fuat's *Siyasi Hatıralar* (Political Memoirs), Kazım Karabekir's *Paşaların Kavgası* (The Conflict of the Paşas), and Ebubekir Hâzim Tepeyran's *Hatıralar* (Memoirs) illustrate that the Ottoman and later Turkish context provided fertile ground for the production and publication of personal narratives of state leaders, political intellectuals, nation builders, novelists, journalists, social activists, and artists. A detailed history of the development of the autobiographical genre in the Ottoman and Turkish context has yet to be written. My analysis concerns a specific genre of autobiographies, which I entitle "non-official self-na(rra)tions," produced in response to one particular performance/text, Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* (The Speech).

Narrative Monopoly

After the delivery of *Nutuk* on 15-20 October 1927, Turkish national history was monopolized[1] as alternative narratives were silenced in Turkey.[2] The backlash to this narrative monopoly was the production of a historically and politically specific genre of auto/biographies, written as a response to the narrative of Turkish

1 The monopoly of the narrative of Turkish history in *Nutuk* was secured through state rituals, school textbooks, and national monuments, which were constructed to serve the myth of Mustafa Kemal as the sole prophet of the Turkish nation, as well as national holidays, such as 19 May or 30 August, which ritualized the celebration and commemoration of important events as told in *Nutuk*.

2 In 1926, the Independence Tribunals executed many Unionists and political opponents of Mustafa Kemal. After the instigation of *Takriri Sükun* (The Law on the Maintenance of Order), the political opposition's press was silenced; a few of the political opponents, such as Dr. Adnan Adıvar, Halide Edib Adıvar, and Dr. Rıza Nur, went into self-imposed exile.

national history in *Nutuk* and the role of Mustafa Kemal in the Independence Struggle of Turkey, and thereafter as the President of the Republic. These autobiographical writings belonged to historical and political agents whose "services to the nation" or agency in the transition from Empire to nation were dismissed or degraded in *Nutuk*. Such "non-official self-na(rra)tions" had precedents in the Ottoman context, particularly during the rule of Abdülhamid (1876-1908), in a number of political memoirs and autobiographies, the most notable of which was Midhat Paşa's (1822-1884) *Hatıralar* (Memoirs), the life and accomplishments of an Ottoman vizier in the Tanzimat era, who, locked in a prison cell in Taif, clandestinely wrote his memoirs and miraculously sent the manuscript to his family before being executed by Sultan Abdülhamid.[3]

With the aim of countermanding the Gargantuan *Nutuk*, the Others of the "I-nation"[4] also wrote encyclopedic accounts, trying to narrate the totality of historical experiences to which they were first-hand witnesses, while simultaneously promoting their perspective of–and their agency in–nation building. Such autobiographies included Kazım Karabekir's encyclopedic oeuvre, roughly totaling forty volumes, the most significant volumes of which are *Hayatım* (My Life), *İstiklal Harbimizin Esasları* (The Facts of Our Independence War), *Paşaların Kavgası* (The Conflict of Paşas); Halide Edib Adıvar's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*[5]; Ali Fuat Cebesoy's *Siyasi Hatıralar* (Political Memoirs), and Rauf Orbay's *Siyasi Hatıralar* (Political Memoirs). Most of the autobiographers wrote their accounts unaware that others were engaged in autobiographical writing; some autobiographers were in exile in various countries, while others were working on their autobiographies in strict confidentiality in Turkey.

These encyclopedic narratives delegitimized the solipsist and antagonistic account of *Nutuk*,[6] as they constructed a narrative of self-legitimization and interdependence, illustrating the agency and significance of a plurality of leaders and common people who took part in the Independence Struggle and the process of nation building in the twenties.

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3 Midhat Paşa's *Memoirs* was a self-vindication, written in response to Sultan Abdülhamid's attempts to libel him as the murderer of Abdülaziz. See Midhat Paşa 1997: 13. The memoir was published after Abdülhamid was overthrown with the proclamation of the Second Constitution in 1908.

4 The "unified nation and the unified self are presented in *Nutuk* as interchangeable and intertwined; in general, the nation is denied an autonomous existence extricated from the I of the narrative." The self of *Nutuk* could more accurately be termed the 'I-nation.'" See Adak 2003: 518.

5 Both works were translated into Turkish as *Mor Salkımlı Ev* and *Türk'ün Ateşle İmtihanı* in the 1960s.

6 *Nutuk* "foregrounded the role of its narrator in Turkish history at the expense of defaming or ignoring the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph, the roles of the leading figures in the national struggle, and the establishment of the republic." See Adak 2003: 509.

Further, these "non-official self-na(rra)tions" challenged the "narrative of discontinuity"[7] as they narrated in lieu of a rupture, a transition (told through the maturation of the self/narrator) from Empire to nation. Several accounts countermanded the temporal hegemony of Turkish national history over the history of the Ottoman Empire with narratives of nostalgia for Empire (such autobiographies include Halide Edib's *Memoirs* or Rıza Nur's *Atatürk Kavgası* [Conflict with Atatürk]).

Although most of the "non-official self-na(rra)tions" were written in the 1920s and 1930s, their production was not simultaneous with their publication as most were not published until the 1990s.[8] Most of them were banned because they violated the law, under the heading, "Crimes against Atatürk," which from 1951 onwards punished those writers who produced works offensive to "the memory of Atatürk."[9]

Dr. Rıza Nur

One of the most striking examples of "non-official self-na(rra)tions" was by Dr. Rıza Nur. Born to a very devout Muslim and Turkish family in Sinop in 1879, Rıza Nur pursued a medical career until 1908, writing academic books, such as *Fenni Hıtan* (Circumcision Operations) and popular books on medicine, such as *Frengi ve Belsoğukluğuna Yakalanmamak Çaresi* (Preventive Measures against Syphilis and Gonorrhoea). At age 29, Rıza Nur became the youngest member of the recently-convened Ottoman parliament. After supporting *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (The Committee of Union and Progress), Rıza Nur first joined the opposition party *Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası* (Ottoman Liberal Party) and later united the entire opposition to the Committee on Union and Progress under *Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası* (Party of Freedom and Understanding or Entente Liberale). In 1910, he co-organized an anti-CUP rebellion in Albania and wrote very critical anti-CUP articles in the press which led him to be exiled in 1913. For six years, he lived in Switzerland, France, and Egypt, only returning to the Ottoman Empire in the immediate aftermath of the Ottoman defeat in World War I, when the CUP leaders had fled the Empire. In 1919, in Istanbul, he joined the Independence Struggle and was one of the delegates in the first diplomatic treaty signed by the na-

7 The "narrative of discontinuity" signals the impulse in *Nutuk* and in official republican history, to construct a narrative of "distinct separation from the Ottoman Empire." See Adak 2003: 518.

8 Halide Edib's *Mor Salkımlı Ev* and *Türk'ün Ateşle İmtihanı* are exceptions to this rule. Both works went through serious censorship when they were published in the sixties in Turkey. See Adak 2003: 526.

9 The law was passed by the Turkish National Parliament in 1951. As late as the 1990s, authors of works offensive to the "memory of Atatürk" could be punished with up to three years of imprisonment. See Yashin 2002: 202.

tionalists with Soviet Russia in 1921. The Moscow Treaty ended the war on the eastern front, which led to the recognition of Turkey as a legitimate state.[10]

From 1920-1921, Dr. Rıza Nur served as the Minister of Education, and from 1921-1923 as the Minister of Health and Social Welfare in the Büyük Millet Meclisi (Grand National Assembly). In 1922, in order to prevent two committees of delegates, that of the Istanbul government and that of the Ankara government (the nationalists) from joining the Lausanne Peace Conference, he prepared a bill entitled the *Teşrinisani Kararı* (The November Decree), with the aim of simultaneously abolishing the Sultanate, giving single-handed power to the government in Ankara, and making the new state of Turkey secular. In 1923, he was chosen as the Member of Parliament from Sinop and was among the delegates participating in the Lausanne Peace Conference. After Lausanne, Rıza Nur supported but never officially joined the political opponents of *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (Republican People's Party), knowing that the opposition party would be shut down, and because he feared for his life.[11] He wrote a fourteen-volume work entitled *Türk Tarihi* (Turkish History), twelve volumes of which were published during the 1920s.

By 1926, when Dr. Rıza Nur left Turkey to go into self-imposed exile in France, he had lost all confidence in the Republican People's Party and had declined many positions, such as becoming a Turkish Ambassador to one of the European countries, because he considered it a dishonor to work for Mustafa Kemal's government. During his seven-year exile in France (1926-1933), he wrote his autobiography *Hayat ve Hatıratım* and entrusted it to the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris and the British Museum in London. After doing research on history and literature in Alexandria during his exile (1933-1938), he returned to Turkey following Mustafa Kemal's death (1939) to publish journals on Turkish culture, such as *Türk Birlik Revüsü/Revue de Turcologie*[12] and *Tanrıdağ* (Godmountain).

Hayat ve Hatıratım (My Life and Memoirs)

Dr. Rıza Nur's autobiography is a 1,700-page self-encyclopedia, using a multiplicity of styles and covering all the events between 1879 and 1935, the end-point of writing. The encyclopedic scope of the autobiography, aspiring to narrate everything within the self's horizon of knowledge, is a typical response, as most of the other "non-official self-na(rra)tions" illustrate, to Rıza Nur's dismissal from the monopoly of the Turkish national narrative in *Nutuk*.[13]

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10 The Moscow treaty also allowed arms and ammunition to be smuggled into Anatolia to help the Turkish struggle against the Greeks.

11 See Nur III 1992: 331.

12 This journal was published simultaneously in French and Turkish.

13 In *Nutuk*, Rıza Nur is mentioned as one of the names on the list of delegates sent to the Lausanne Peace Conference (See Kemal 1999: 934), although his import in this conference as well as other events in Turkish history are ignored. *Nutuk* interprets the rebellion in Al-

Five distinct forms/styles of writing can be traced in the self-encyclopedia:

Confessions: The entire text is a conglomerate of confessions, but the confessional mode is most evident in the first volume of the autobiography, depicting the narrator's childhood, adolescence, and early adult years as a medical doctor, roughly covering 1879-1919. In the prologue to the autobiography, the narrator reveals a Rousseauean impulse unprecedented in the Ottoman-Turkish context. According to Nur, "such a truthful account of a man [as his own account] has never existed," and those negative attributes of the self which Nur could have hidden, he revealed in this honest and truthful portrait of himself.[14] Unlike Rousseau, the confessions do not merge with self-justification but with a cynical analysis of human nature. From the particular, the "I," the narrator derives insights into the evil in human nature.

Memoirs of the Lausanne Peace Conference is an inscription of Rıza Nur's import as the person who wrote the speeches that the head of the Turkish delegation, İsmet Paşa, delivered. This section covers memoirs of a private and public nature, revealing Rıza Nur's weaknesses and strengths at the conference, as well as an objective analysis of the Turkish delegation in comparison to European delegates who participated. There are recurrent references to the foreign press coverage on Rıza Nur, which acts as self-justification and proof of his import in the negotiations at Lausanne.

Political criticism of Turkey in the 1920s mostly focuses on *Nutuk* and the deification of Mustafa Kemal (1923-1930), with extensive comments and criticisms of the reforms, laws, and the press in Turkey.

The lengthy political program of the "*Türkçü*" Party is proffered by the narrator as an alternative to shape the future of the Turkish Republic. The "Türkçü" Party is to replace the Republican People's Party, appropriating the Ottoman and Selçuk heritage, and clearing Turkey from the state icons of the 1920s. The party is to ensure a secular republic which would restore the institution of the Caliph-

bania not as an anti-CUP rebellion but as one targeted against Turks in Rumelia, resulting in the evacuation of Turks from Rumelia. This, according to *Nutuk*, caused an "eternal and fatal sadness in every Turk." Kemal 1999: 1180. As if this part of Turkish history were recently uncovered in 1927, the "I-nation" of *Nutuk* narrates the overwhelming shock in members of parliament when they discover Nur's misdemeanors against Turks. *Nutuk* presents Rıza Nur as an enemy of the Turk and thus defames Rıza Nur, who, in modern Turkey, becomes an absent name from Turkish history books, schoolbooks, and national monuments, and who, at certain instances, becomes a scapegoat for the shortcomings of the Lausanne Peace Treaty. The original is as follows: "Fakat Türklerin Rumeli'den çıkarılması gibi, her Türkün kalbinde ebedi ve elim bir hicran yaşatan büyük felaket hadisesinde mürit milliyetperver Rıza Nur Bey'in Arnavut asileri ile beraber, Türkler aleyhinde, faaliyette bulunduğunu bilmiyorduk. Buna ittila hasıl olunca, Büyük Millet Meclis'ini hakiki bir dehşet istila etti" (Kemal 1999: 1180).

14 Nur I 1992: 70.

ate, take precautions against the intervention of the military into politics, and instigate an Office for Racial Affairs to monitor the pure Turkishness of public officers.

The biography of the self, or what I entitle, **"Rıza Nur tarafından Rıza Nur, or Rıza Nur par Rıza Nur,"** was originally located at the end of the self-encyclopedia. Exclaiming that it is perhaps "bizarre" for a person to describe himself, but that "nobody can know a person better than that person himself,"[15] the narrator undergoes a critical and structuralist analysis of Rıza Nur forty-five years prior to the publication of *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*. The narrator appropriates the "I" in writing, without depicting the different "I"s of being in history, talks about the general characteristics of the "I" as a sum total (the I becomes a common denominator of the different I's in history) of the lived experiences until 1930. This "common denominator I" is pure *volonté*, with no sense of pleasure, and a pure commitment to honesty and service to the nation. "Rıza Nur tarafından Rıza Nur" ends with a list and commentary of the published and unpublished works of Rıza Nur.

Misanthro-graphy

Most autobiographies written after *Nutuk*, including Rıza Nur's *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, are intertextual, not in the sense of interacting with historical, literary, or autobiographical works in the broader sense or with each other, but in the sense of interacting exclusively with one particular work, *Nutuk*. This is because most of the autobiographies written after *Nutuk* have been produced as a response to the particular way Turkish history was narrated in *Nutuk* and the way this narrative was monopolized by the Kemalist regime.

In those autobiographies which the autobiographers decided to publish**,** e.g. Halide Edib's *The Turkish Ordeal*, the interaction with *Nutuk* is subtle and implicit,[16] whereas in the autobiographies which were not meant for publication, such as Rıza Nur's *Hayat ve Hatıratım*,[17] the criticisms of *Nutuk* and the Kemalist regime in the 1920s and early 1930s are rather explicit and severe in tone.

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15 See Nur I 1992: 149.

16 *The Turkish Ordeal* does not relate the period after 1922 even though its explicit aim is to criticize the Kemalist Regime. The work occasionally hints to the dictatorship in the twenties.

17 Rıza Nur entrusted the manuscript to libraries in Paris and London to be published after 1960, with the explicit aim of keeping the works out of the reach of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet: It would be a "pity on history if Mustafa Kemal and İsmet get a hold of the memoirs" Nur I 1992: 501. The original is as follows: "Hele Mustafa Kemal ve İsmet'ten evvel ölürsem Hatıratımı behemal elde edip mahvetmeye gayret edeceklerdir. Buna muvaffak olurlarsa tarih için yazık olur."

The autobiographies written after *Nutuk*, including Halide Edib's *The Turkish Ordeal*, Kazım Karabekir's *İstiklal Harbimizin Esasları*, and Ali Fuat's and Rauf Orbay's *Siyasi Hatıralar* are at the nexus of autobiography and biography, and confound the structuralist analysis of each as outlined in Philippe Lejeune's "The Autobiographical Contract,"[18] as they give equal emphasis to the involvement of Mustafa Kemal and the protagonist/autobiographer/narrator in question. Rıza Nur's *Hayat ve Hatıratım* complicates this genre in a unique way. Concomitantly an auto- and biography, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is what I would like to coin a "misanthrography," written by a misanthropic narrator,[19] who defines himself unreservedly as such.[20] This text diminishes and negates all affirmative depictions of its protagonists and antagonists, including the narrator himself.

Although the auto- and biography work hand in hand, for purposes of analysis, I would like to separate the two. The misanthro(bio)graphy or "biography of Mustafa Kemal" differs from the conventional concept of "biography" as an analysis of a historical actor whose import is taken seriously by the biographer, even in cases when the biographer is critical of the protagonist of the biography.[21] *Hayat ve Hatıratım,* as misanthro(bio)graphy, diminishes the import of its protagonist, Mustafa Kemal, in the context of Turkish history, illustrating the means by which the Struggle and the establishment of the Republic have been monopolized by the solipsist "I-nation" of *Nutuk*. The "I-nation" of *Nutuk* is not only degraded as a public figure but severely reprimanded for his personal flaws.

Misanthro-biography: Delegitimizing the Narrative of the "I-nation"

If *Nutuk* is the sacred text of the Turkish Republic, Rıza Nur's *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is a text of blasphemy, profaning not only the sacred text of the Republic but also its author, while attempting to rectify the narrative of the history of Turkey. Published after an extensive process of censorship, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is a cryptic text often difficult to comprehend.

As misanthro-biography, *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is replete with blasphemies, serving to desecrate the sacred, to profane the prophet of the Turkish nation, as the text challenges certain myths constructed in *Nutuk*. These include, among others, the myth of Mustafa Kemal as the sole hero or secular prophet in Turkish his-

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18 Lejeune separates the autobiographical pact from the biographical pact by outlining the formula for the former as: "Author is/is not the narrator is the protagonist"; and the latter as: "Author is/is not the narrator is not the protagonist" (Lejeune 1982: 204-5).

19 The narrator in a self-critical tone analyses his misanthrope as a direct result of some of the traumatic experiences he went through in his childhood. Most of the friends he tried to help cheated and betrayed him. Such experiences taught him never to trust or befriend anyone thereafter (Nur I 1992: 102).

20 Nur I 1992: 120.

21 Examples include biographies of Adolf Hitler, such as Joachim C. Fest's *Hitler* or Ian Kershaw's *Hitler: 1936-1945: Nemesis*.

tory, the status of *Nutuk* as a sacred text, the myth of military success, and the narrative of discontinuity of the Turkish Republic from the Ottoman Empire.

Backstaging the myth of the sole prophet of the nation

Hayat ve Hatıratım frequently resorts to depicting the backstage of some of the processes, titles that *Nutuk* would like readers/audiences to take for granted. One such title is that of *başkumandanlık*, or "commander-in-chief" in the Independence Struggle of Turkey, which allowed the "I-nation" of *Nutuk* to legitimize his divine status after the war as the Savior and Conqueror of the Nation.[22] The "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* reminds us that the Sakarya Victory was described in *Nutuk* as proof of the "I-nation"s clairvoyance to predict victory and deliverance from the enemy in the following words: "Whatever happens, we will gain victory. I had foreseen talent in this Nation. I defeated the enemy."[23] However, the narrative of glory and the triumph of the military leader Mustafa Kemal are described differently in *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, as we are reminded of the events leading to Mustafa Kemal's unique means of acquiring the *başkumandanlık* title.

In 1922, in parliament, the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* claims to have proposed that Mustafa Kemal become *başkumandan*, which was confronted by a livid Mustafa Kemal who refused the title because he did not want his name attached to military defeat and humiliation, exclaiming to Rıza Nur in Parliament: "Defeat is certain. You would like me to be commander-in-chief so as to slander my name and destroy my reputation."[24]

According to *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, three days after this exchange of belligerent words, Mustafa Kemal proposed accepting the title of *başkumandan* only if all legislative and executive authority over the Assembly was handed over to him. For the first time, the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* claims to have lost consciousness in reaction to this proposal, and forgetting himself, was later told by his colleagues that he was banging his fists on his head, shouting in his frenzy, "What does this man want? What kind of a proposal is this? Can this be given? Can such a thing be requested?"[25]

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22 Adak 2003: 517-518.

23 The original is as follows: "Ben ise o insanlara behemehal muvaffak olacağız diyordum. Aklım, ferasetim Milletteki bu istidadı görmüştü. Düşmanı mağlup ettim" (Nur III 1992: 212).

24 The original is as follows: "Mağlubiyet mutlak. Sen beni rezil olsun, şerefim gitsin diye başkumandan yapmak istiyorsun" (Nur III 1992: 200). In fact, the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* argues that for all struggles that carried the potential of defeat, Mustafa Kemal used İsmet and Fevzi Paşas as leaders, just like Hacivat and Karagöz, but claimed all the victory for himself (Nur III 1992: 212).

25 The original is as follows: "Eyvah, bu adam ne istiyor? Bu nasıl iş? Bu verilir mi? Bu istenebilir mi?" diye bağırmışım, durmuşum. Ben farkında değilim. Sonra yanımdakiler söylediler" (Nur III 1992: 201).

The "benevolent "I-nation"" of *Nutuk* then from the point of claiming the title *başkumandanlık* onwards as the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* so accurately predicts, claims divine-like status for himself, making laws according to his will, and executing people according to his will. This, the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* finds unparalleled in history, with the exception of Julius Caesar, who requested authority over the Roman Senate, proclaiming himself "Half God."[26] The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is not suprised to find out that after the Sakarya Victory, Mustafa Kemal requested the title of "*gazi*" from the Parliament; this fit in perfectly with Mustafa Kemal's aspiration to become padişah and to sign his name "el gazi" like the padişahs. Although the "I-nation" of *Nutuk* claims that the Assembly granted the title of gazi to him,[27] the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* refers to how the Assembly resisted at first and how Mustafa Kemal also requested a financial reward from the Assembly for his services in Sakarya, which was refused.[28]

The exploration of the backstage of deification techniques of Mustafa Kemal continue with a plethora of examples of the construction of a deity in the press. The opposition to Mustafa Kemal's Republican People's Party is silenced and the journalists are punished severely as the press is monopolized in the 1920s. Most of the prestigious writers of Turkey during the 1920s, including Yakub Kadri and Falih Rıfkı, are mocked by the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, for being the spokespeople of the monopolized press. The journalists describe a paradisean state of affairs in Turkey and newspapers such as *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* (National Sovereignty, a newspaper bought by Mustafa Kemal himself) write about how the Gazi is a genius, and a divine creator (*ulu yaratıcı*), which is a translation from Arabic to modern Turkish of *Halik-i Azim*[29]. The epithets used include *ulu Gazi*, *yüce Gazi*, *Kudret Haliki*, *Mukaddes Reis*, which the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* finds difficult to distinguish from Abdülhamid's *zillullah-ı filarz*, meaning "the shadow of God."[30] The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* refers to one particular newspaper which grants Mustafa Kemal a place higher than any epithet likened to Abdülhamid. On 26 March 1928, Mustafa Kemal was introduced as "*Türk Devletinin banisi*," or "The Creator of the Turkish government," and in lieu of besmele[31], the picture of the big *münci*, or savior, was placed: "So in lieu of the *besmele*, the picture of Mustafa Kemal. Then he was made God. And this much was not even granted to Abdülhamid. He was only the shadow of God: *zillüllah-ı fil arz*."[32]

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26 Nur III 1992: 200-201.
27 Nur III 1992: 220-221.
28 Nur III 1992: 221.
29 This is one of the adjectives of God, meaning the Mighty Creator.
30 Nur III 1992: 314.
31 The newspapers used to have besmele or "in the name of Allah," on the cover page.
32 The original is as follows: "Besmele yerine Mustafa Kemal'in resmi!…Demek Allah yapıyorlar. Bu kadarı Abdülhamid'e de denmemişti. Herif sade yerde Allah'ın gölgesi idi. "Zillüllah-i fil arz…" Nur III 1992: 342.

"Consequently I am both writing and having put this Nutuk *in front of me, I am rectifying the …"*[33]

The "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* does a structuralist analysis of *Nutuk*, criticizing most severely the fact that *Nutuk* is presented as historical fact, when the text has actually distorted or fabricated events which could, at the point of writing, be retold by witnesses who were still alive. *Nutuk*, according to the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, is a personal struggle ("*şahsi kavga*") and it is nothing but a personal and subjective account ("*şahsiyattan başka bir şey değildir*"), vilifying those leaders who turned against Mustafa Kemal, justifying the Independence Tribunals and the executions, and illustrating that the "I-nation" accomplished everything single-handedly. The text is a personal epic full of hubris and pride, and prophet-like sayings.[34] The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is frustrated most by the attitude of members of parliament as they listen to *Nutuk* like sheep to a shepherd's pipe for six days. The narrator believes such a speech is unparalleled in history, and cannot comprehend how the MPs actually endured the entire performance. Several of the "sycophants" applaud after the six days while others cry from excitement, speechless under the effect of the eloquence and poignancy of the gigantic epic: "I cannot find words to address my appreciation. My nervousness is preventing me from speaking coherently. This work should be published by the hundreds of thousands and should be distributed all over."[35] According to Nur, the bearer of these words, Necip Asım, must have been paid to utter these sentences. Nur states that Necip Asım was a very successful artist, who ended the show with crocodile tears.

According to the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, the production of *Nutuk* is not as frustrating as its reception. It is not solely Mustafa Kemal, but the sycophant politicians and particularly the monopolized press that make of *Nutuk* a sacred text. An excerpt from Falih Rıfkı's article on the cover page of *Milliyet* newspaper dated 30 July 1928 is sufficient proof of the sanctification of *Nutuk*:

> If the history of the Gazi were left in obscurity, what would our situation be? Do not just read Nutuk, keep it like a dictionary/guide at your desk at all times! This book will serve the function of an amulet in times when fables and fairy tales are fabricated, it will save you from all accidents both visible and invisible. The publication of Nutuk is a big reform![36]

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33 What the narrator is rectifying in *Nutuk* is censored. "Binaenaleyh hem yazıyorum. Hem de bu nutku önüme koydum. …. tashih ediyorum" (Nur I 1992: 564).

34 Nur III 1992: 308.

35 The original is as follows: "Takdir için söz bulmaktan acizim. Heyecanım mani oluyor. Bu eser yüzbinlerce basılıp her tarafa dağıtılsın" (Nur III 1992: 308).

36 The original is as follows: "Eğer Gazi tarihi meçhulat içinde kalsaydı, halimiz ne olacakmış! *Nutuk*'u yalnız okumayınız, bir kamus gibi masanızın üstünde daima tutunuz! Bu ki-

The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* expresses his anger not only at journalists like Falih Rıfkı, but at the Air Force Committee for constructing multifarious statues of Mustafa Kemal and publishing *Nutuk*. The narrator comments in mock tone that perhaps these busts and *Nutuk* are planes and will help in a potential or imminent war. Reflecting on Falih Rıfkı's words that *Nutuk* is full of wonders like an "amulet" and will rescue everyone from all accidents and "ill-fate," the narrator exclaims: "Damn them. Why don't you buy a few airplanes instead with that money?"[37]

Finally, the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* narrates how one of the "chief sycophants," Yakup Kadri, puts a title for the laws, the system, the regime, the sayings, the mentality, the ethics, the "spirit" of this person, all summed up neatly under the title of "Kemalism." Other journalists, such as Giritli Ahmet Cevat, writing in the monthly journal *Muhit*, find solutions to every problem with "Kemalism," which the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* cannot help but describe as "Penasse" (*deva-i kel*), or a solution to all problems, including science, education, ethics, economics, and finance.[38]

Another deification technique the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* emphasizes is the desecration of the past so that the founder of the new Turkey and the father of all reforms can be presented as the sole prophet throughout Turkish history. The types of vandalism mentioned in *Hayat ve Hatıratım* include erasing names of sultans from history books, eliminating Ottoman history courses from schools, and erasing *tuğras*[39] from mosques and fountains. [40]

Self-Legitimization: Transcending the parameters of the Kemalist na(rra)tion:

Critical of Mustafa Kemal's techniques of self-deification, the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* does not attempt to create a prophet-like status for himself in the context of the encyclopedic autobiography. Not claiming transcendence over history, the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* illustrates in detail the self's development or *bildung* through time. The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is not so much concerned about narrating a position of self-aggrandizement within the context of the Kemalist narrative of the nation; rather, he constructs a different and unique

tap size hurafatta muskalara isnat olunan hizmeti görecektir, görünür görünmez kazalardan masun bulunduracaktır. *Nutuk*'un neşri, büyük inkılap..." (Nur III 1992: 363).

37 The original is as follows: "Tayyare cemiyeti Mustafa Kemal'in birçok büstlerini yaptırmış. *Nutuk*'u da o bastırmış. Galiba bu büstler ve *Nutuk* tayyaredir. Yarın harpte imdada yetişir. Zaten Falih Rıfkı'ya göre muska gibi mucizeli imiş, her kaza ve belayı def edermiş! ... Körolasılar. Şununla birkaç tane tayyare alsanız ya..." (Nur III 1992: 363).

38 Nur III 1992: 518.

39 The sultan's signature.

40 Nur III 1992: 395.

context for the self within a different trajectory for nation building. This trajectory, especially as outlined in the "Türkçü Party Program," is one of the main traits that distinguishes *Hayat ve Hatıratım* from other oppositional autobiographies written in response to *Nutuk*; for instance, Kazım Karabekir's *İstiklal Harbimizin Esasları*, which replicates Kemalist national history and tries to re-position the narrator into that same history.

In lieu of the Republic in the 1920s which otherizes Kemal's political opponents, the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* envisages a Republic which otherizes non-Turks. The narrator preaches a strict ethnic nationalism which will be maintained through an Office for Racial Affairs. The purity of blood that the narrator believes to be a precondition for every Turkish citizen, is exemplified best with him, the evidence of which he provides with reference to his entire family from Sinop, who are of pure Turkish blood and, for the past two hundred years, the narrator assures his readers, have not mixed with other races.[41]

The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* provides an extensive account of the context of abolishing the Sultanate, describing in succinct detail how he prepared the bill and how it was passed in the Assembly in 1922. The "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* provides three major reasons for abolishing the Sultanate. First, to separate the Caliphate from the state, to end the conflation of religion and state, i.e. what he found to be the cause of all the problems of the past; second, as national revenge to punish the Sultans whose inconsistent acts during the Struggle had been costly; third, to have the new Turkey represented in the Lausanne Peace Conference (1922-1923) by one government rather than two. With these plans, the narrator started preparing the bill, which he entitled *Teşrinisani Kararı*, or The November Decree. The members of parliament all signed this takrir, or bill, but Mustafa Kemal's name was toward the end, and allegedly he took a long time to reflect before signing. In parliament, the *Teşrinisani Kararı* passed, receiving big applause. The narrator of the bill considers the preparation of this bill to be one of the biggest services he provided the Turkish nation, quoting the words of a French delegate who witnessed the scene in parliament: "I congratulate you. Mustafa Kemal entered İzmir. He recorded a big victory. Yes, but what you have done is much more significant. This nation may forget Mustafa Kemal. But you never."[42]

Being the mastermind behind the Teşrinisani Kararı, the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is highly critical however of the abolition of the Caliphate, which he sees to be a crucial position finding its analogue in Christianity in the Pope, whose authority and centrality was strengthened by Mussolini.[43] The "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* illustrates the advantages of retaining the position of the Caliph-

41 Nur I 1992: 73-4.

42 Nur II 1992: 183, 185, 186. The original is as follows: "Sizi tebrik ederim. Mustafa Kemal İzmir'e girdi. Büyük zafer kazandı. Evet, fakat, bu senin yaptığın ondan çok büyüktür. Bu millet Mustafa Kemal'i unutabilir. Fakat seni unutamaz" (Nur II 1992: 185).

43 Nur III 1992: 278.

ate, in how the Indians for instance supported the National Army both financially and psychologically in the Struggle.[44] The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* denies *Nutuk*'s justifications for the abolishment of the Caliphate, claiming that the Republic was pronounced secular together with the abolition of the Sultanate and that the Caliphate did not need to be removed to insure secularism.[45]

Several of the prominent traits upon which the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* builds a different trajectory for the nation-state is the denial to narrate the Independence Struggle as a collective trauma which legitimizes the Turkish nation's being. The end-result of the prioritization of the Struggle is the intervention of the military into politics, which the narrator finds extremely dangerous for the future of Turkey. A second includes inheriting rather than destroying the Ottoman past, be this in the form of national holidays, history, statues, or icons. Lastly, the narrator criticizes the reforms of the 1920s, which he describes as a period of "reform fashion," with no other purpose but to propagate Mustafa Kemal as a *müceddid*, or reformist:

> With one law, he had them put on the hat. He closed down the *medreses*[46] and *tekkes*.[47] They translated the Swiss Legal Code and executed it. Now there is this reform fashion. They make reforms everyday and write this in bold in newspapers. This situation concerns not only Mustafa Kemal but also his members of parliament. What a contagious disease is this reform disease! Cholera is nothing in comparison![48]

Claiming originality behind the ideas of reforms for himself, that the Swiss Legal Code, the hat, and the closing of the *tekke*s and *medrese*s were discussed in his voluminous *Türk Tarihi* (Turkish History) written in the early 1920s, the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* proceeds to illustrate the problems behind the execution of the reforms. For instance, the Swiss Legal Code has many Christian traditions which need to be adapted to Islamic tradition. This is neglected as the Swiss Legal Code is borrowed lock, stock, and barrel in 1926.[49]

A community of one…

Hayat ve Hatıratım fits into the genre of "non-official self-na(rra)tions," complicating the genre with the tension between the impulse for self-justification and self-aggrandizement as vindication of the self's significance in Turkish history

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44 Nur III 1992: 491.
45 Nur II 1992: 260.
46 Theological school attached to a mosque.
47 Dervish lodges.
48 The original is as follows: "Birer kanunla şapkayı giydirdi. Medrese ve tekkeleri ilga etti. İsviçre kanunu medenisini tercüme ettirip tatbik ettiler. Şimdi de artık bir inkılap modası çıktı. Hergün bir inkılap yapıyor ve bunu şatafatlarlar gazetelere yazdırıyorlar. Bu hal Mustafa Kemal ve vekillerine de sirayet etti. İnkılap hastalığı ne sair hastalıkmış? Kolera yanında halt etsin!" (Nur III 1992: 312).
49 Nur III 1992: 313.

and the negative and cynical attitude toward the self and humanity. On the one hand, Rıza Nur is the person who named Turkey "*Türkiye*"[50] and was one of the representatives who conceptualized *Misak-ı Milli*, or The National Pact, of 1920[51], while on the other, he is the one who attempted to rape his neighbor's daughter in Sinop, who acted as family doctor and gigolo to wealthy married women to rise in his medical profession, who violently beat his wife, who left several slave girls and domestic animals to die in the hands of his sadist wife, and who told countless other misdemeanors and acts of evil in his quest for truth and exploration of the anatomy of the human soul.

Although the narrative of events in *Hayat ve Hatıratım* has the explicit purpose of illustrating the interdependence of effort that went into the Independence Struggle and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, to countermand the solipsist account of Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk*, the end-product is a text which acknowledges the significance of the roles of the leaders that *Nutuk*'s account dismisses,[52] simultaneously vilifying them. Even when giving agency to other leaders in the Struggle, the narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is critical of other leaders' military or political mistakes.[53] If a flaw cannot be found, the narrator resorts to the issue of race. As such, certain leaders are disqualified from serving the Turk if they are not of Turkish descent. This is why, in 1922, Rıza Nur opposes the decision to allow Rauf Bey to head the committee of delegates sent to Lausanne, on the pretense that Rauf is an Abaza[54] and cannot fully execute "the business of the Turk."[55] This is the reason why Rıza Nur convinces Mustafa Kemal to entrust the same mission to İsmet Paşa, whom he later finds out, much to his chagrin and disappointment, is a Kurd from Bitlis.[56]

In the misanthrography, a utopia of purity of blood and race, pure Turkishness, pure devotion to the tenets of Islam, honesty, absolute devotion to serving the Turk and the nation, and absolute truth are put forth, ideals which none of the characters of the autobiography, including the narrator, can fulfill. In this structure of idealism, all historical agents, with the exception of the narrator's saintly mother, fail, as all protagonists are portrayed negatively, even when the explicit aim is to promote their significance.

The last section of the autobiography, i.e. "*Rıza Nur tarafından Rıza Nur*" carries the sad realization that the autobiographer, the narrator, the biographer, the biographer of the self, the addresser, and the addressee are but one person. The

50 Nur III 1992: 54.
51 Nur I 1992: 542. The pact roughly defined the borders of modern-day Turkey.
52 Such leaders include Kazım Karabekir, Halide Edib Adıvar, Dr. Adnan Adıvar, and Rauf Bey.
53 This tendency is best exemplified in the epithet his friends give the narrator, kronik muhalif, meaning chronic opposition or adversary.
54 A member of the northwest Caucasian people.
55 Nur II 1992: 180.
56 Nur II 1992: 234.

lines, "I worked always so as to be called an honest, hardworking nationalist," or the words, "This nation will never forget you" (uttered by the French delegate after Rıza Nur prepared the bill to abolish the Sultanate) echo back to the writer as he adds, "This is what I wanted everyone to say," which conceal the tragic realization that "nobody says this" or "nobody will say this."[57] The position of not addressing anyone, of not having an immediate reading group to address, comes to the fore here, together with the realization of Rıza Nur's complete alienation from the records and rituals of republican history.

Sixty-eight years after the writing of *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, and roughly forty years after its initial publication,[58] Turkish readers still have very little to say about this enigmatic yet significant political intellectual's puzzlingly unique autobiography. Very few history books mention Dr. Rıza Nur,[59] and Kemalist reading groups have used the narrator's confessions as a means of proving his perversity and alineating him from the chronicles of Turkish history. Rıza Nur's Türkçü party program, which includes restoring the Caliphate and revitalizing the dervish lodges, was interpreted not as a different trajectory of nation building that needs to be taken into consideration in evaluating the 1920s in Turkey, but as ideas that need to be condemned. Kemalist reading groups cited Rıza Nur's proposition that women be moved back to the domestic sphere as a regressive tendency that legitimized the condemnation of the entire text itself.[60]

In the 1990s, Islamists appropriated the text, but for the wrong reasons. In the introduction to the autobiography, Abdurrahman Dilipak agrees with the narrator in his oppositional stance toward the deification of Mustafa Kemal and to-

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57 Nur I 1992: 149.

58 The state endorsed a ban on the book after its initial publication in 1967 because it violated the law "Crimes against Atatürk." The book was published in the 1990s by the Islamic Press, İşaret Yayınları.

59 This rule applies to critical academic books, such as Erik Jan Zürcher's *Turkey: A Modern History*.

60 For Kemalist criticism of Dr. Rıza Nur and his autobiography, see Pulur: 28-30, Güresin: 27; Atay: 19-20. The narrator of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* is rather conservative in his outlook on women. It seems, however, that this problem has its roots again in Rıza Nur's misanthrope. With the exception of his mother, who is described in the autobiography as an angelic figure, the narrator never emotionally bonded with or loved a woman. In "*Rıza Nur tarafından Rıza Nur*," the "I" of *Hayat ve Hatıratım* describes a misanthropic self unvisited or unhaunted by pleasure. See Nur I 1992: 156. The self is not addicted to anything, not alcohol, not sex, not gambling, not nicotine, not entertainment, not eating. Not interested in women, the narrator recalls the period in his youth when he longed to be a eunuch. His relationships with women consist of pure lust, a biological necessity that the narrator cannot emotionally accommodate because of his hatred and condescending attitude toward women. See Nur I 1992: 150. The narrator looks at women then at a functional and moral level; in the former context, he cannot see women being as competent as men in the professions, while in the latter, he cannot see the rise of morality in society when women are more involved in the public sphere. His cynical perspective on human (or better "male") nature leads him to suspect that society would witness more adultery and prostitution when women enter the professions.

ward the making of official Turkish history into an epic, but tries to fit Rıza Nur into an ideological mould, which condemns all efforts to join the European Union because of the threat to national integrity. Such an ideological context falls short of accurately representing Rıza Nur's progressive ideals.[61]

This unique misanthrography still waits in dusty bookshelves of rare bouquinistes in Turkey and in manuscript form at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, the British Museum in London, and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin as the modern tragic problem of the narrator is further enhanced: "The torment of a creature condemned to solitude and devoured by a longing for community."[62]

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61 See Nur II 1992: 17; Nur III 1992: 17.

62 Lukács counterposes the modern tragic problem to classical tragedy where narratives of fate affirm collective unity in the wake of suffering. See Lukács 1971: 45.

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The Sociable Self: The Search for Identity by Conversation (*Sohbet*)

The Turkish Literary Community and the Problem of Autobiographical Writing

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The connection between memory and autobiographical writing is obvious. From our childhood, all experiences and memories are accumulated and arranged on a self-related matrix that is our autobiographical memory, which gives us the competence to become a self-conscious individual and to narrate a life-story. Our early memories are based on interaction with and narrations of our parents and other members of the family. Memory researchers characterize the family as a memory community, which creates the family-story by conversational memorizing. There is a mutual interchange between the individual autobiographical memory and the communicative memory of the we-group of the family. While talking about the past or common experiences all members of the memory-community contribute to importing settings, background, atmosphere, and fragments of events from other stories into the own life- and family-story. The stories from which these elements are borrowed are a part of the social, cultural, historical, and intertextual material of a scattered memory providing narrative models for the communicative and the autobiographical memory (based on: Welzer 2002).

These introductory remarks are something like a theoretical substructure for my assumption that besides the family, there exist other memory communities who create their history by conversational memorizing. A special type of biographical writing, the often so called literary memoirs (*edebiyat anıları* or *hâtıraları*), which have become very popular in Turkish literature since the beginning of the twentieth century, gave me the idea that the community of the intellectuals, poets, writers, journalists, and artists are a memory community like an extended family with several branches, who write their history by conversational memorizing.

My selected bibliography may give an impression of the quantity and variety of books belonging to this genre and show the similarity of titles, which are meaningful enough to prove the close relationship of this community of writers and their protagonists, the heroes of the biographical sketches.[1]

In these memories, the authors do not tell their own life-stories. However, they gather around themselves famous poets, adored teachers, friends, and col-

[1] For this reason, I include in my works cited many titles which are not mentioned in the text.

leagues talking about meetings, reconstructing conversations and dialogues, and telling anecdotes. The author writes very associative, even if the heading of an article is the name of an individual person. He does not concentrate on this person alone and rarely tries to delve into the inner life of an individual. There is always namedropping, several members of the literary community are present on the scene, and reading these essays as an outsider, you should have ready on hand one of the useful biographical dictionaries[2] that are a specialty of Turkish literature. Turks like encyclopedias. It seems to me all the writers agree that the most laudable moral quality is sociability.

Before these essays are collected in a book, they are published in newspapers or periodicals, and are exposed continually to the audience of readers and critics. In the first stage of the reception, the "reading community" reacts, and critics discuss the articles in different newspapers and periodicals. Consulting these critical discussions is therefore indispensable for anyone who wants to understand intellectual movements in Turkey. Prominent critics and journalists (*köşe yazarları*) collect these articles and publish them in their anthologies. These books are used as sources for literary history and reflect the intellectual atmosphere of a period and generation, but they also have an autobiographical dimension that shows the personality and worldview of the author. In my bibliography, I have included as an example of this last genre two titles by the humanistic critic and journalist Vedat Günyol (1911-2004), who wrote neither poetry nor novels.

A Turkish writer once drew my attention to the fact that the means of expression for intellectual and literary discourses in Turkey were not treatises in great detail, but rather small articles in newspapers and periodicals. In his opinion, this led to short thinking and a lack of great vision. In my view, however, this kind of thinking is characteristic for an intellectual community which likes permanent conversation by talking and writing. Therefore, the establishment of printing houses and the development of the press in the nineteenth century were very important. The writers gained a kind of autonomy, because they could earn a part of their living by writing for newspapers and periodicals, being that many of them were clerks (*kâtib*) in government offices.

Two of the oldest magazines which were very important for the formation of the modern literary community were *Tercüman-i Hakikat* and *Servet-i Fünun*. Ahmet İhsan (Tokgöz) (1868-1942), the editor of *Servet-i Fünun* (founded in 1891), published his memoirs under the title *Matbuat Hatıralarım* (My Press Memoirs) in his own magazine in the years 1930-31 and collected them soon afterwards in two volumes. He tells the story of his first encounter with the admired novelist and editor of *Tercüman-i Hakikat*, Ahmet Midhat (1844-1912). As a young student of

[2] See Yalçın 2001. This is one of the best encyclopaedias and includes a list of previous encyclopaedias that served as sources.

the *Mekteb-i Mülkiye*, he translated articles from French magazines and sent them to Ahmet Midhat for publication. However, initially he did not dare to visit the office of *Tercüman-i Hakikat*, and Ahmet Midhat did not know who the translator was. Ahmet İhsan was very proud when he saw that his articles had been printed and strolled along the Babıâli Street to see Ahmet Midhat with his long black beard passing by. One day he had entered the office's building but was still hesitating whether or not to knock on the door of the office when Ahmet Midhat suddenly came out and caught him and approached him: "Who are you?" – "I am Ahmet İhsan" – "So you are the translator of the articles. Where did you learn your French?" This first encounter of a young ambitious adept with an admired author signifies something like an initiation rite and it is a narrative model for autobiographical writing. In this case, the encounter had great consequences, because Ahmet İhsan became an influential figure in the formative period of the modern Turkish literary community. His memoirs published in serial form are mainly concerned with the literary community of the *Servet-i Fünun/Edebiyat-i Cedide* writers, but one also finds a deeper autobiographical dimension because he goes back to his childhood and describes how early he set himself the ambitious life-goal to establish a printing house and to publish books. He was a strong-willed personality and got it his own way. Ahmet Midhat liked him due to his determination and industriousness and encouraged him (see Tokgöz 1993: 36f).

In the offices of printing houses and newspapers, and at the street corners and in the bookshops of Babıâli (*Bizim Yokuş*) and Cağaloğlu, it was always possible to encounter well-known writers and young enthusiasts. All the restaurants, tearooms, and coffeehouses in Beyazit, and especially in the Western Levantine quarter of Istanbul in Beyoğlu/Pera, the Gardenbar at Tepebaşı, the cafes Lebon and Markiz in the Grand Rue de Pera (later on Istiklal Caddesi), and the winebars, like Lambo in the Balıkpazarı near the Çiçek Pasajı, the old famous hotels Pera Palas, Tokatliyan, and Park Oteli, and many others became meeting places for the literary community. Of course, the popularity of the places changed over time and generations, as groups with different ideological positions preferred different places. Some were transfigurated by the communicative memory and became mythical places (see for instance Mehmed Kemal 1985: 219, 222).

Many of the well-known literary figures held their own *sohbet*-circles in their *konak*s, houses, and apartments. In a way, these *sohbet*-parties can be regarded as secularized sufi-meetings. The respected host took the place of the sheikh of a Sufi-order. Tevfik Fikret's (1867-1915) private house on the hill near Rumeli Hisarı, called Aşiyan, became a place of pilgrimage for all the young poets, who adored this charismatic figure of high moral standing. Yakup Kadri called this exaggerated adoration of the poet later *Fikretperestlik* (see Karaosmanoğlu 1946 : 18f.; 1969: 269-293). Taha Toros (born 1912), who as a literary enthusiast visited as many *sohbet*-circles as possible, describes the Monday meetings in the old *konak* of İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal (1870-1957) in Beyazit as conversations about

literature and art of the highest standards. The meeting-salon was always crowded with visitors. There was a special seating plan and order and the host did not take notice of young unknown obtrusive persons, who had to sit on uncomfortable stools near the door (Toros 1992: 36-48). Toros found a similar situation at the Friday-meetings in the great apartment in the Maçka Palas, where the eminent poet Abdülhak Hâmit (Tarhan) (1852-1937) resided at the end of his life at the public's expense (Toros 1992: 49-62). Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889-1974) noticed in his memoirs that Hâmit himself didn't like talking much, preferring instead to listen to the conversations of his guests and avoided questions about literary topics (Karaosmanoğlu 1969: 261-264).

One of the well-known sociable people (*hoşsohbetler*) was the poet Yahya Kemal Beyatlı (1884-1958). He became a famous poet and writer without having published a single book during his lifetime, but he was a frequent visitor of the *sohbet*-parties and wrote for magazines and newspapers. Yahya Kemal's example seems to give reasonable evidence for the supposition that the *sohbet*-community kept alive the oral tradition of the Ottoman past. Unpublished poems recited at a *sohbet*-party were memorized by the participants. Yahya Kemal, who had been asked by his young friend Baki Süha Ediboğlu (1915-1972) to write his memoirs, answered: "*Batılı yazar doğulu konuşur*" (The Western people write the Eastern people talk; Ediboğlu 1968: 3). And in a letter to Faruk Nafız (Çamlibel) (1898-1973), he wrote: "*Şiir yazı olmadığı için baki kalacaktır*" (Because poetry belongs to the oral tradition, it will exist forever).[3] At the end of his life Yahya Kemal lived in the legendary Parkhotel at Gümüşsuyu and received his admirers on the balcony or in the hotel bar.

Thus the members of the literary community spent their entire lifetime in conversation and writing their daily column (*köşe*) or article for the newspapers. Often they wrote on tables in restaurants or coffeehouses. One can hardly imagine that there was any time left for loneliness and introspection. The sociable self finds its identity by asserting its position in the *sohbet*-society and cultivating the communicative memory at the expense of its individual autobiographical memory. The career of a writer becomes visible through the changing of places in the seating order, starting from the uncomfortable stool next to the door, moving to the comfortable chair next to the host and finally reaching the pinnacle of the development by sitting in the center of his own *sohbet* circle.

Even outsiders like the productive novelist Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar (1864-1944), a queer fish who used to live the whole year in his summerhouse on Heybeli Ada, very seldom visited the printing house in Cağaloğlu, and invited only a few friends to visit him, were a part of the literary community. Hüseyin Rahmi published his novels first in serial form in newspapers and communicated with his friends and readers by letters and with his colleagues by the medium of the

3 See *Kitap-lık* 6, Aralık 2003, 86 ("In a letter to Faruk Nafız," 11 Eylül 1926).

press. He was an ardent polemicist and got into harsh disputes with his critics.[4] The men of letters were not really complaisant people. Their competitive spirit stirred up many animosities and hostilities in the literary community.

After the Young Turkish revolution of 1908, literary magazines and newspapers sprang up like mushrooms and became more and more assembly points for writers and mouthpieces of different poetological and ideological positions. There were violent debates about language reform, the advantages of *Osmanlıca* or simplified Turkish (*öz Türkçe*), discussions about the classical Ottoman Poetry (*Divan Edebiyatı*), the poetical forms, rhyme and rhythm, the *aruz* and *hece* metre, and so on. Under the Young Turks, Turkish national consciousness and feeling was cultivated and propagated by the *Türk Ocağı* (The Turkish Hearth) and its magazine. In this club, cultural events where women were allowed to take part and even to speak publicly were organized (see Glassen 1999: 86f.; Glassen 2000: 46). The outstanding female figure of this time was the novelist Halide Edib (Adıvar) (1882-1964), who engaged herself by writing articles that promoted the education of girls and women's rights (see Glassen 2002: 350-369). The Türk Ocağı became a public place where women writers could meet their male colleagues. Later on there was the Alay Köşkü in the Gülhane Park, where the *Güzel Sanatlar Birliği* (Association of Fine Arts) organized meetings, and where artists and writers of both sexes talked about their productions (see Alevok 1971: 341, 355).

After 1908, more and more young women became literary enthusiasts enthralled with reading Halide Edib's novels and ambitious to become writers themselves. They published their articles, stories, and novels in newspapers and magazines, sometimes under (male) pen-names. The Babıâli, the quarter where the printing houses and the offices of the newspapers were concentrated, was a male-dominated world, and the integration of women writers in the literary community was a painful process. Halide Edib tells in her *Memoirs* that she–even though writing for a long time successfully for the newspaper *Tanin*–never set eyes on its editor, the adored poet Tevfik Fikret, because "I was not emancipated enough to go to the newspaper offices" (Adıvar 1926: 263). Sabiha Sertel (1898-1968) who, together with her husband Zekeriya Sertel (1890-1980), would later on play an important role in the history of the Turkish press as editor of the magazine *Resimli Ay* and the left wing oriented newspaper *Tan*, was as a young wife not permitted by her husband to attend the editorial conferences in their own house. Halide Edib participated in these conferences dressed in her black chador. Only when Zekeriya was arrested by the Allied occupation forces (1919), Sabiha seized the opportunity and was able to continue the publication of the critical magazine *Büyük Mecmua* during his absence (see Sertel 1987: 24-33).

The exiting escape of the Turkish women from the segregated harem and their appearance in public began during the time of the Young Turks and was stimu-

4 See Sevengil 1944 : 68-102, *Münakaşalarım*.

lated in the early Republican era. Their male colleagues were unaccustomed to mixing with unveiled Turkish-Muslim women, and if these ladies were young and attractive, they could hardly fend off proposals of marriage or flattering compliments, and sometimes they felt that they were being pestered and molested. This was not at all conducive to establishing normal, informal gender relations. Of course many of the young women writers enjoyed the admiration, but they had to stick to firm moral principles and sometimes entered quickly into marriage to become more respected in public. Step by step they got used to submitting their final manuscripts in the newspaper offices of Babıâli personally and became known to many of their colleagues, but for a long time there were very few women writers taking part in the literary *sohbet*-circles in public restaurants and cafés. The relatively free gender relations changed the emotional life of both sexes. Arranged marriages fell out of fashion and superficial flirtations and ardent love stories with all their complications became widespread in Turkish society. Women writers experienced the new lifestyle and were predestined to concentrate their novels on love stories. Many of them became very popular and their readers bombarded them with letters. These novels, which were produced quite quickly and published in serial form, may not have been of the highest literary quality, but they were badly needed. They contributed to the establishment of new social moral values in close communication between writers and readers.[5] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's initiative for their emancipation made most of the educated women of the first Republican generation strong Kemalists and Turkish patriots (see Glassen 2002 b).

In 1918, Ruşen Eşref (Ünaydın) (1892-1959), who with his famous literary interviews collected under the title *Diyorlar Ki...* (They told me, that...) created a new genre of *sohbet*-literature, visited the victor of Anafartalar, the then young and fairly unknown officer, for an interview (see Ünaydın 1954). This was Mustafa Kemal's first contact with the literary community, and this meeting remained not without serious consequences. During the War of Independence, famous writers came to his headquarters in Ankara, among them Halide Edib and Yakup Kadri. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal was on friendly terms with many of the old literary elite of Istanbul, who came to Ankara, giving him support in building a national Turkish ideology or as members of the Grand National Assembly. There were also many frequently visited cafes and restaurants in Ankara, but the most prominent meeting-place and *sohbet*-circle for Turkish intellectuals in the new capital was the *sofra*, the dinner table of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.[6] It seems he enjoyed the company of writers,

5 For the experiences of women writers see the memoirs of Alevok 1971; Kür 1985; Uçuk 2003; Zorlutuna 1977.

6 See Ayda 1984. Her father Sadri Maksudi was very often present at the *sofra*. She tells many anecdotes, for instance: 25-27. Glassen 1999: 86.

sometimes at the expense of his old war comrades. Many of the writers shuttled between the new capital Ankara and the old beloved Istanbul.

Istanbul kept its traditional position as the center of the Turkish press. Most of the popular newspapers and magazines stayed in the old capital. The liberal and left wing oriented writers gathered around Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel and their *Resimli Ay* magazine. Nâzım Hikmet (1902-1963), who had studied in Moscow and was influenced by Majakowskij, led a press campaign against the old generation of poets, like Abdülhak Hâmit, and published a series of articles in *Resimli Ay* under the headline, "Let's break the idols into pieces." Abdülhak Hâmit, who referred to as, "The great genius and the eminent poet," invited the young rebel for dinner, and Nâzım Hikmet was impressed by the old poet's intellectual vividness and his understanding towards the new generation.[7] Abdülhak Hâmit survived these attacks and became a highly respected member of the parliament and inaugurated a session of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara as president by seniority (see Ayda 1984: 9).

Afterwards Nâzım Hikmet himself became an idol for the younger generation. He spent many long years in Anatolian prisons where he carried on writing and translating and even published under pseudonyms. While in prison, his conversation with his colleagues continued and through his criticisms he influenced the development of two well-known Turkish prose writers who were in prison with him: Kemal Tahir and Orhan Kemal (see Glassen 1991). Literature was always a dangerous business. Banishment, exile, and imprisonment were common experiences of Turkish writers not only during the Ottoman period, but also in the Republic, when the fear of anti-Kemalist, reactionary uprising and the infiltration of communist ideas produced strange effects. When Nâzım Hikmet was released after twelve years of imprisonment in July 1950, he remained under strict surveillance. He managed to leave Turkey and lived from 1951 on in the Soviet Union, always longing for his beloved homeland. His works were banned for a long time and it was dangerous to read his poems, but he nevertheless became a symbol of identification for the Turkish leftists who never elaborated their own ideology. Nâzım Hikmet was absent in prison and in exile, but he was always present in his secretly read and sung poems, and in the anecdotes and memories of the literary community in Turkey.

It seems quite obvious and is worth mentioning in our context that in Turkey, political ideologies were for the most part not created and imposed by individual philosophers or leaders, but rather developed and promoted by groups of companions or friends in *sohbet*-circles. Even the so-called "Kemalism," still an iridescent term for ideas propagated by Atatürk and his followers of various shades, has never been a unified whole and a clear construct of ideas produced by the leader's brainwork alone, but was developed in discussions and debates.

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7 Sertel 1987: 79-131 (about the *Resimli Ay* affairs).

For this thesis I will give three examples: First, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, one of the most honest "Kemalists," saw clearly that ten years after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the task to transform the national enthusiasm of the period of the war of liberation into revolutionary social engagement of the intellectuals and the common people had failed. Therefore, he took the initiative and published together with a group of friends the monthly political magazine *Kadro* (Cadre) (1932-1934). They tried to strengthen the national Kemalist revolution (*inkılap*) by discussing and defining its ideology and principles and constructing a cultural identity based on a new understanding of Westernization and Turkish nationalism according to Mustafa Kemal's still thriving spirit (see *Kadro* 1932-1934; Glassen 1999: 88).

Second, more then ten years later a group of Turkish intellectuals debated and elaborated another variety of Kemalism, the so-called "Turkish humanism" or "Blue Anatolian humanism" (*Türk Hümanizmi*, *Mavi Anadolu Hümanizmi*). They discussed a new conception of history: In their view, the Turks who came from Central Asia and settled in Anatolia hundreds of years before had in the meantime fused fully in the melting pot of Anatolia with the people who had lived there before. Therefore, they claimed that the Turks were the legal heirs of the ancient Greek civilization and proposed they should take over and cultivate this heritage on which the modern Western civilization and science was based. To be an Anatolian meant for them being predestined and responsible for going back to pure Greek sources before these were mixed with Christian elements in Western civilization and finding a path that was their own.[8]

Third, not only secularized, Westernized Turkish intellectuals who wanted to get rid of their "Oriental mentality" searched for models and conceptions of a national identity by discussions with friends, but there were also groups who wanted to preserve and modernize Islamic Turkish traditions and to find out modern intellectual dimensions of mysticism (*tasavvuf*). In November 1951, four young (modern-dressed) women writers called together in the Istanbul quarter of Fatih a literary meeting and presented a book about their spiritual leader Ken'an Rifâî under the title "Ken'an Rifâî and Muslim belief in the light of the twentieth century." This meeting aroused great interest and was celebrated by critics in different newspapers as an intellectual event. Cevdet Perin (1914-1994) even guessed that now the materialistic period of the Republic was over and a new stage was reached in which the spiritual meaning of the Turkish revolution was announced.[9]

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[8] See Kranz 1997. To this group belonged Halikarnas Balıkçısı (Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı) (1890-1973), Sabahattin Eyuboğlu (1908-1973), and Azra Erhat (1915-1982). About Azra Erhat's *Memoirs*, see Glassen 2002 b: 242-254. Vedat Günyol was a good friend of Eyuboğlu and Erhat. This group of Turkish humanists was involved in many activities (*Köy Enstitüleri, Tercüme Bürosu, Mavi Yolculuk*).

[9] See Yardım 2003, 97-101. These four young writers were: Nezihe Araz (b.1923), Safiye Erol (1900-1964), Samiha Ayverdi (1905-1993), and Sofi Huri (? a Syrian Christian). Together

These three different ideological concepts elaborated by small intellectual circles had the common goal of solving the conflict between Westernization and Turkish (Islamic) national tradition.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, a new genre of prose-fiction was imported from the West: the novel.[10] The novel was understood by the Turkish writers of the Tanzimat-era, who were at the same time the outstanding reformers, as a mirror of reality and a medium to propagate Western ideas and values and to criticize Ottoman society. Westernization thereafter became the most important issue discussed by the Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals and as well the main topic of Turkish novels. Social and cultural tensions caused by Westernization were personified in characters that adhered to the Oriental tradition or were influenced in a positive or negative way by Western ideas, behavior, and fashion.

The first productive and popular Turkish novelist was Ahmet Midhat, who saw his mission in popular education. He published his novel *Felâtun Bey ve Râkım Efendi* in 1876, the year of the proclamation of the first constitution. In the same year, *İntibah veya Sergüzeşt-i Ali Bey* (The Rude Awaking or the Adventures of Ali Bey) by Namık Kemal came out, and both writers had just returned from exile. Ali Bey is the sentimental romantic lover and Felâtun Bey the lazy over-Westernized dandy. Both types became very popular and were often imitated in literature and reality. However, with Râkım Efendi, the moralist didactic Ahmet Midhat created a rather unique character in Turkish literature. Râkım was from a humble social background and made a career for himself thanks to his self-discipline and industriousness. To reach his goal of economic success and social advancement, Râkım consciously and successfully uses these Western values which lie in stark contrast to the Ottoman lifestyle of lucky laziness and ease (*keyif*, *huzur*[11]). He never wastes his time with gossip, like Felâtun Bey does. His daytime functions like a clockwork mechanism; he walks around for seventeen hours, eager to learn as much as possible of Western sciences and languages and always prepared to earn money by teaching and translating. But he never neglects his Ottoman Islamic education; he even learns Persian in order to read the ghazals of Hafiz. He is generous and pleasant; everybody likes him, both his old black nurse and the English family Ziklas, to the daughters of whom he teaches Ottoman Turkish. He also successfully controls his love affairs and emotions. He doesn't slavishly imitate Western customs, behavior and fashion. He only acquires what is useful to fulfill his life plan; he is a utilitarian. Râkım seems to be a happy man, a balanced character. In his soul the elements of the different value systems don't come into conflict as Yakup Kadri observes they do in the case of

with Nihad Sâmi Banarlı (1907-1974), they met always on Tuesdays and translated in three years the first volume of Mevlana's *Mesnevi*; see Yardım 2003: 100, 121. On Sâmiha Ayverdi, see Kaner 1998 and Glassen 2002 a: 381-386.

10 For the development of the novel in Turkey, see Mardin 1974 and Evin 1983.

11 About *huzur* mentality, see Glassen 1987.

Abdülhak Hâmit. Yakup Kadri calls Hâmit an Oriental in complete Western forms in whose soul the contradictions cause a permanent struggle and produce a chaos as if being just before the creation of a new world (see Karaosmanoğlu 1969: 264f.).

This conflict occurs in the souls of the Westernized intellectuals in various forms and with different intensity. One expects there to exist plenty of autobiographies showing how different individuals cope in their lives with this mental struggle to find their own identity. But the social and mental effects of Westernization on the individual are more sensibly and concretely elaborated in the characters of novels than in autobiographical writing. Ahmet Midhat has exposed this problem in the ideal, maybe utopian, character of Râkım Efendi, who found his own way in utilitarianism. Râkım never became a role model, neither in literature nor in reality. It was Ahmet Cemil, the hero of Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's (1866-1945) novel *Mai ve Siyah*, published in serial form in *Servet-i Fünun* in the years 1896-97, who personified the prototype of the literary community of *Servet-i Fünun* and the literary movement of Edebiyat-i Cedide. The Ahmet Cemil type is the young poet and writer educated in the Westernized schools of the Tanzimat period with the ambition to create a new modern style of poetry and literature on the lines of Western trends, in a great work in a purified expressive Turkish language. But he fails due to the social conditions and his personal fate. He becomes disillusioned and soon contents himself with writing for magazines and translating light French fiction to earn his living. This type of the Ottoman-Turkish intellectual had many descendents in the following generations.

There was a late awakening of ethnic consciousness of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turk was "a composite being" as Halide Edib calls it in her *Memoirs* (see Adıvar 1926: 322; Glassen 2000: 45f.) and he was an Ottoman citizen like all the non-Turkish ethnic elements in the Ottoman Empire. The search for ethnic identity of the Ottoman Turks began in the meetings of the Türk Ocağı because non-Turkish elements after the Young Turkish revolution more and more looked after their own national and political interests and during World War I collaborated with the foreign allies. In the War of Independence Ankara, the small provincial town in the center of Anatolia, became the headquarters of Gazi Mustafa Kemal and a national symbol for the patriotic intellectuals in the occupied city of Istanbul. On their way to Ankara,[12] they discovered their homeland Anatolia and the native people for the first time. In Mustafa Kemal's vision of a modern Turkey both developments–Westernization and Turkification–were equally important for the construction of a national identity. He needed the help of the intellectuals as mediators and propagandists of his ideas. As I pointed out before, Yakup Kadri, formerly an outstanding figure of the literary community in Istanbul, became one of the most committed patriotic Kemalists. In his novel

12 See Glassen 1991: 129-131 (about the national road (*vatan yolu*) from İnebolu to Ankara).

Yaban (1932),[13] he provides one of the few self-narrations of critical introspection in Turkish literature. The framework story is negligible: A member of "the commission for the investigation of war atrocities" finds in the ruins of a central Anatolian village an exercise book with the diary of the young officer Ahmet Celâl, who had fought at the Dardanelles and lost his right arm. He had left the Ottoman capital during the occupation by the Allied Forces and taken refuge in the village of his orderly. In his diary he gives a very personal and subjective account of his daily experiences, his feelings, and his state of mind. He is deeply disturbed, because he feels the mutual strangeness of the Istanbulite educated citizens and their compatriots, the Anatolian people. In the novel, Ahmet Celâl is the first person narrator, but it is Yakup Kadri's own voice speaking. The novel has a clear autobiographical dimension. By analyzing the mental state of Ahmet Celâl, the author succeeded in diagnosing a common mental disease of the Turkish patriotic intellectuals. I would say, Ahmet Celâl is the frustrated Ahmet Cemil type. As the reception shows, *Yaban* was a very successful novel. Two years later, in his novel *Ankara*, Yakup Kadri tried to create in the figure of journalist and writer (his alter ego), Neşet Sabit, a strong character, who succeeds in overcoming the frustration and keeps his patriotic enthusiasm and becomes a good Kemalist. But this novel has a utopian dimension and was never really successful in Turkey (see Glassen 2000: 52-54).

The intellectuals in Ankara were homesick for Istanbul and many of them returned for good or shuttled between the new and the old capital as often as possible. In the semi-autobiographical novels *Asmalı Mescit 74*, published in 1933, by Fikret Adil (1901-1973) and *İçimizdeki Şeytan* (The Devil Within Us), published in 1940, by Sabahattin Ali (1907-1948), the literary scene of the time is depicted more or less realistically, showing that the Istanbulite *sohbet*-society in the early period of the Republic indulged in an unconcerned Bohemian lifestyle. The national enthusiasm of the War of Independence was not strong and long-lasting enough to create a national identity in a new man (*yeni adam*, *yeni insan*), a mentally stable individual who had the discipline and energy to build a strong Turkey belonging to the Western civilization as Mustafa Kemal had called for. On the contrary, disappointment, rootlessness, and confusion in the minds of the intellectuals prevailed. Vedat Günyol, who belonged to the circle of Turkish humanists around Sabahattin Eyuboğlu, called them *yarı aydınlar* (half-educated) and *bölmeli kafaları* (divided minds) (see Günyol 1976: 21, 55). The heroes of outstanding novels, such as *Bir Tereddüdün Romanı* (The Novel of a Hesitating Character, 1933) by Peyami Safa (1899-1961), *Utanmaz Adam* (The Shameless Man, 1934) by Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *İçimizdeki Şeytan*, *Huzur* (Peace of Mind, 1949) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) *Aylak Adam* (The Idle Man, 1959) by Yusuf

[13] See Naci 1971: 28: "Aydınlarımız arasında *Yaban*'ı okunmayan yok gibidir... Aydınlarımız da Ahmet Celâl gibidirler." (There was nearly not one intellectuel amongst us who did not read *Yaban*… Our intellectuals were like Ahmet Celâl.)

Atılgan (1921-1981), and *Tutunamayanlar* (The Losers, 1970) by Oğuz Atay (1934-1977) show a tendency towards unstable, split, and self-alienated characters.

It seems strange that Oğuz Atay, whose novel *Tutunamayanlar* is still very popular in the postmodern generation, in his last novel *Bir Bilim Adamının Romanı* (The Novel of a Scientist, 1975) presents in his hero Mustafa İnan a perfect character who succeeds in harmonizing in his mind and behavior Oriental and Western values. Mustafa İnan, who as a professor at İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi was a teacher of Oğuz Atay, died in 1967 in a hospital in Freiburg. This means the novel is a biography based on documents and conversational memorizing with the widow Jale İnan. And it seems remarkable that the structure of the whole novel is conversational. The development of the character of the hero is presented in a long dialogue between a middle-aged lecturer–a colleague of the deceased–and a young student. Mustafa İnan is shown as a sociable, self disciplined individual who founded a scientific school in Turkey by teaching his students in permanent conversation. In his character is harmonized the Oriental capacity for communicative sociability with the Western discipline for work. Thus, Mustafa İnan is a character, who found his identity in sociability and conversation. While Oğuz Atay called his book a novel (*roman*), it is the biographical novel of a scientist, not a poet or a writer, and as far as I can see, the character of the hero has no autobiographical dimensions as "The Losers" do.

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Narratives of Collectivity and Autobiography in Latife Tekin's Works

Sibel Irzık

> I was born in 1957 in the village of Karacafenk, near the town of Bünyan in the province of Kayseri. I started school as soon as I learned to walk. The school was the men's living room in our house. I learned to read and write as I played with the jinn under the divans. Jinn and fairies used to live under the divans in Karacafenk. I spent my childhood among them, secretly joining their community. I went to see their homes, their weddings, and learned their language, their day games and night games. My father used to work in Istanbul. I forget now who told me that my mother was a strange woman with a broken heart. She was literate, sewed, gave injections, and knew Kurdish and Arabic. She used to enquire from the gypsies that came to the village about places and people unknown to me. Her searchings for her past were the first pains that touched my childhood. My father used to come back from Istanbul with sacks full of money and gathered the villagers. Our house was full of strange gadgets, magic metals. I had no idea of their use…
>
> In 1966 I came to live in Istanbul. It felt like a sharp pain that split my childhood. Unfulfilled dreams tore apart the people I grew up with. My father quickly became working class, then gradually fell into unemployment. Three brothers worked on construction sites. I finished high school, slipping away like a trembling shadow from seven brothers and sisters. I paid the price of moving away from fear and loneliness to go to school: subjected to a thousand denials and pressures, I was incredibly shaken. I fought hard to keep up with the city and was badly bruised. During my struggles I fell apart from those that I grew up with. But I resisted in order not to lose my own values, my language, and the constant and passionate love that those people bore me. This book is my reward from the people I grew up with for my resistance (Tekin 1996: 9-10).

This is a quotation from Latife Tekin's introduction to the first edition of her first book, *Dear Shameless Death*. Saliha Paker includes it in her introduction to her and Ruth Christie's English translation of Tekin's second book, *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills*. Tekin's account of the background and the ultimate meaning ("This book is my reward…") of her first step into authorship contains fairly clear indications of the type of relationship between fiction and autobiography that I want to explore in this paper. What I would like to establish about this relationship is that the autobiographical element in fiction is not a matter of whether or to what extent fiction reflects the author's life as it is already formed before the fiction. It is a matter of complex negotiations of authenticity and authority carried out within and around the fiction, by the author, her readers, and critics. The connections that are made between the author's life and her work influence not only the reception of the work, but also the production of later works. Latife Tekin is an interesting case in point because her early work was

strongly shaped by a claim of authenticity and a challenge against literary norms, both the claim and the challenge deriving their main force from references to the life of the author, especially her class origins. The later work, on the other hand, reflects an attempt to grapple with the autobiographical fact of having written the earlier books, of having indeed become an author, and what this means in the context of the life surrounding the fiction.

Tekin's introduction and her similar statements about her background and the sources of her creative practice are widely quoted in the introductions and on the back covers of her books as well as in much critical writing about her work. There seems to be a widespread tendency, when Latife Tekin's work is in question, to provide the customary biographical information about the author in the form of a first-person narrative. It is as if there were something about this author's life that resists external description, something that is accessible and expressible only in the form of the author's own testimony. This testimony typically transports the language and the imagery of the work to the description of the life, establishing a seamless continuity between the life and the work and effecting a mutual authorization between the two: "Jinn and fairies used to live under the divans in Karacafenk. I spent my childhood among them, secretly joining their community." The implication is that the life behind the work has become accessible only, and for the first time, through the language of the work, while the language of the work is the very form in which that life was experienced in the first place.

In her own introduction, Paker emphasizes Tekin's use of fantasy as a means of "reconstructing an individual experience that was authentic and indigenous" (Tekin 1996: 9). In his preface to the same work, John Berger claims that *Tales from the Garbage Hills* is about language, "not because Latife is a postmodernist or a structuralist, but because she is familiar with the lives lived on the garbage hills. She knows deeply how nick-names, stories, rumors, jingles, gossip, jokes, repartees constitute a kind of home, even the most solid home, when everything else is temporary, makeshift, illegal, shifting, and without a single guarantee" (Tekin 1996: 7). "Authentic," "indigenous," "familiar," "knows deeply"… These characterizations hint that the language and forms of Tekin's narratives about "home" are authorized by a special knowledge, an inside view of what has so far been excluded from and inaccessible to literature. In more qualified, somewhat more tentative terms, Latife Tekin agrees. In a 1987 interview, for instance, she says:

> I want somehow to claim poverty as mine. It is something like being without alternatives. Of course, my insistence on poverty has something to do with the fact that poverty is my past. But at the same time, I want to reverse many things that have been said about poverty. And for this, the only source I can cite is my own life, what I have written, my own past. Only by beginning from there can I persuade people, or myself. . . You know how a poor person is one that does not exist, one that lacks so many things. Well, how do these people who lack many things live while lacking many things, how do they carry themselves in this world, all these interest me deeply. But these are never included in all that is written, all that is said about poverty (Tekin & Savaşır 1987: 140).

In view of this autobiographical discourse accompanying Latife Tekin's entry into the Turkish literary scene and conditioning the reception of her work, it seems surprising at first that the first two novels have hardly any of the formal features of autobiographical fiction.[1] But the narrative forms of both *Dear Shameless Death* and *Tales from the Garbage Hills* result quite directly from the *specific type* of autobiographical claim that motivates Tekin's writing: the claim that she articulates through the notion of poverty. This is a claim to a communal voice, to a form of writing that preserves the oral cadences of a communal language and the utter lack of stability and authority in that language (c.f. Gürbilek 1999: 40). This claim to communality is further supported by and reflected in the political meaning that Tekin initially attributed to writing and authorship. She envisioned her own writing as part of a collective political act through which large numbers of excluded and defeated voices would for the first time find literary expression. Once again, her life, this time not the world of her childhood, but her positioning of herself outside the literary establishment, would be the basis of continuity between her work and its political context:

> I was not a university graduate or anything; I didn't know how to use a typewriter, and I was also raising a child. All this made it easy for people to identify with me both while I was writing and after the book came out. A sense of "if she is doing it, we can also do it." As for me, I imagined a commonness of emotion, an identification, almost a relationship of representation between my generation and myself, and between the poor in general and myself... It was as if I was becoming known, and I was speaking, not as an author, but as one of them (Tekin & Savaşır 1987: 134).

In a somewhat paradoxical way, then, Tekin's self-definition as having been indelibly marked by poverty, and her self-definition with reference to a past of political activism served to establish autobiography as an authorizing, external context to narratives of collectivity that resist the shape of autobiography. The impersonal narrative voice and the strict avoidance of interiority in *Dear Shameless Death* and *Tales from the Garbage Hills* are among the most obvious signs of this resistance. Even when these narratives contain individual life stories, they prevent them from exerting any real pressure on the impersonal rhythms of habit, ritual, tradition, rumor, and survival. They do not permit the establishment of temporal or spatial boundaries–the differentiation of the past from the present or the future, of the inside from the outside, the private from the public. Like the collective lives they describe, these narratives are deprived of an ability to accumulate change in the form of growth or development, and to register lack in the form of desire or mourning. A single tense inflects them, stringing together actions and events instantaneously slipping away into an unpossessable past (c.f. Gürbilek

[1] Gürbilek 1998 has drawn attention to the fact that these two novels avoid the use of a narrating "I" as well as other signs of an individual perspective or style.

1999: 39-40). They are blind to the spaces outside the immediate locations of these actions and events, almost resisting the very possibility of perspective, of a view from some outside point. Because having, recounting, presenting a life story is a form of appropriation that is precluded by the condition of poverty, and because every act of authorship is inevitably an act of self-authorization, Tekin's early narratives attempt to disavow authority and appropriation by concealing their own written and autobiographical character.

While citing her life as the source of her writing then, Latife Tekin seems to have erased every trace of this citation *as* a citation. She seems to have sought the voice of collectivity in a kind of innocence achieved by avoiding the consciousness of autobiography as a literary form. This innocence is protected by the refusal to register the bifurcated temporalities, voices, and selves of autobiographical writing–the divisions between acting and seeing, remembering and inventing, the past of living and the present of writing, the authority of experience and the vulnerability of confession.

At the end of *Dear Shameless Death*, when Dirmit's emergence as a writer both triggers and compensates for the death of her mother, the possibilities and the horrors of laying a claim to a life through writing are already apparent. Poetry comes to Dirmit as a sort of madness. She hears voices, climbs on roofs, and looks at the members of her family with unrecognizing eyes. This is what Latife Tekin describes in her account of her own life as "slipping away like a trembling shadow from seven brothers and sisters." But this trembling shadow is not cast over the book as a whole because Dirmit's alienation from home is contained by being described in the language of home (cf. Gürbilek 1999: 40). The conversations she carries out with clouds, stars, and the snow, are not, after all, a very far cry from her mother's intimacies and bargains with the jinn, God, and Azrael. Yes, the final pages of the letter she writes to her family soar over the city and remain unread by them. Her brother whispers to the city with tears in his eyes: "What has my sister written about me?" But the writing of the letter in six days and seven nights is much like writing a charm that reconnects Dirmit to her mother. It is because Dirmit plays strange games with black dots that she is able to see her dead mother put up a good fight against the demons of hell and wreak havoc in the other world. Both the sadness and the humor of this ending resonate with Latife Tekin's statement about her writing as resistance to rupture: "During my struggles I fell apart from those that I grew up with. But I resisted in order not to lose my own values, my language, and the constant and passionate love that those people bore me. This book is my reward from the people I grew up with for my resistance" (Tekin 1996: 10).

But rupture is both the subject and the style of Tekin's third and most autobiographical novel, *Night Classes*, and I believe that it is prepared and shaped to a large extent by a trauma of authorship. Tekin has been very explicit about this trauma. She has referred to the publication of her highly acclaimed first novel as

a tragic break from her past and the occasion of a nervous breakdown. About the process of writing it, she says, "there was rather a painful aspect to it. A feeling as though I was exposing the people among whom I had grown up. A kind of loss of dignity" (Tekin & Savaşır 1987: 135). She seems to be angry with people for liking her book: "People's greed for written texts, their greed for aesthetic forms was unsettling, frightening" (Tekin & Savaşır 1987: 136). In the same 1987 interview, as the author of three books, she says:

> Today, authorship, like all other professions, is a position that demands peculiar privileges, a peculiar form of power. But I still define myself, try to define myself as a poor person. This requires having been unable to internalize a sense of power, just like having been unable to internalize a sense of possession. A demand for a privilege because of what I do embarrasses me. Moreover, in my case, there is a doubling of the problem: By defining myself as an author, I end up demanding a privilege because I speak of poor people, because I describe their pains. It is as though I become an authority on and above them (Tekin & Savaşır 1987: 133).

In *Night Classes*, autobiography becomes a means of resisting this position of authority. This time, Tekin deliberately marks her text from within as autobiographical, to the point of introducing it in a parodic tone, as the "pale memories and breathtaking confessions of a young militant" (Tekin 1986: 9). Her political past enters and disfigures the narrative not only as the scar of a defeat, but also as a rupture between herself and her class, a betrayal of the people she had grown up with. This has naturally been widely commented on, but it has been interpreted in rather narrowly political terms. Most critics read the novel as a reaction against a particular form of leftist politics, alienated from the masses, authoritarian in its hierarchies and its repression of individuality. Some, like Yalçın Küçük, who included it in his list of "*küfür romanları*," the post-1980 novels of blasphemy against the left, have seen it as a condemnation of politics altogether.

What I am suggesting instead is that *Night Classes* is a much more general problematization of claims to know and represent, to speak for and about lives that have been condemned to silence. The novel's protagonist Gülfidan has a love hate relationship with the secret organization she joins, partly because she feels that she has gained acceptance by *using* her life story and her origins, putting them into circulation as a means of clearing a space for herself. This is not very different from Tekin's perception of her acceptance into the position of authorship: "By defining myself as an author, I end up demanding a privilege because I speak of poor people, because I describe their pains." Gülfidan's first meeting with the women's branch of the organization at the beginning of the novel is like a primal scene of turning one's life into an object to be presented to others by shaping it as an authentic story:

> When they asked me who I was, I hung the picture of a sensitive bird into the eyes of forty women. Silently and tenderly, I bent the bird's neck to one side. "I come from a home where the women are alone," I moaned… To the curious gaze of forty women, I brought out into daylight a private picture hidden in my memory. Those who were

> gathered in the night room bent breathless over the fading silhouette of a young woman crying over her bleeding finger in a stone kitchen. I told them how my mother with coal black hair had cut her fingers with a knife hundreds of times during her life, and how she had cried as she wrapped colorful pieces of cloth around her bleeding fingers, holding one end tight between her teeth (Tekin 1986: 15).

Gülfidan answers the question of who she is by telling them what kind of home she comes from. She reaches into her memory, uncovers a hidden, private vision, and makes it public in the presence of strangers. She turns her mother into a picture and offers the picture to the curious gaze of the women. This, of course, is what happens when one writes about one's life, and it reads very much like a specific description of Latife Tekin's writing of *Dear Shameless Death*: a woman who defines herself through a past of poverty, writing a story woven around the picture of a mother. The shame and self-irony in this description point at the crack that the writing has opened within the teller of the story.

In *Night Classes*, autobiography flows into the narrative through this crack. All the fragmentations, dislocations, and vulnerabilities of autobiographical writing that had been kept out of the first two novels come back with a vengeance. Not only does the narrator say "I," but she does so in a cracked voice. Time and space become fragmented as Gülfidan's past and present keep invading each other and her unconscious erupts into her public persona. Interiority comes into existence as a space in which one can get lost. The female body, of which we had only glimpses in the earlier books, emerges both as a claim for autonomy and as the scene of violation. Gülfidan describes herself as a militant who has "forced her body to experience sexual love with slogans" (Tekin 1986: 92). This sense of a fall into words, experienced both as love and as violation, also brings a woman's fear of writing into the foreground. But at the same time, the narrator characterizes the writing of the text as her giving birth to her second child, thereby claiming a specifically female form of authority over it.

Night Classes is autobiographical not because it offers some form of a representation of Latife Tekin's life as it exists outside the writing. It is autobiographical because through and around it, Tekin renegotiates the relationship between her life and her writing as well as her authority over her writing. A sentence uttered by the split narrator of the novel seems to be a particularly apt description of all such autobiographical negotiations: "Oh my life, you were never mine" (Tekin 1986: 56).

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"Me, Who Got into the Text, Me, Who Became the Text"

Encounter of fact and fiction in contemporary Turkish autobiographical writing

Börte Sagaster

Paranın Cinleri (The Djinns of Money), a book by Murathan Mungan, is a collection of autobiographical essays first published in 1997.[1] It begins with Mungan's account of a childhood memory: At the age of three or four, little Murathan develops a great passion for deer. As he is constantly talking about these animals, his father reaches a point where he can't bear the situation anymore. He leaves their house in Mardin, a town located in the southeast of Turkey close to the Syrian border, for the nearby mountains to catch a deer for his son. When he comes back with the animal, the family builds a cage for him under the stairway of their house. Little Murathan is delighted by this new and beautifully-eyed guest and every morning goes to visit the deer and to look at him with affection. After a while, his family secretly sets the homesick deer free again and puts a stuffed deer in his place. Little Murathan doesn't realize the difference and goes on visiting and admiring his beloved deer every day.

Murathan Mungan, born in Istanbul in 1955, is one of today's most renowned Turkish literary figures.[2] In this anecdote, he skillfully picks up the problematic relationship between reality and fiction, time lived and time remembered, which makes up the sub-textual level of his book. He shows here how a subjective viewpoint can form and change reality: The deer, although replaced by a stuffed animal, remains the same in the perception of the boy. The stuffed deer, which is perceived as a living one, is a parable for the remembered life; while the person remembering perceives the events of his or her past as real, they have in fact changed over time and have become a kind of fiction.

Can a person refer to himself as "I" when writing about the past since the past "I" has little or nothing to do with his current "Self?" Is it really feasible to record our past objectively? Doesn't the act of writing down our memories and the passing of time each hinder our ability to give a true account of our own life? Isn't our selective way of remembering the past an obstacle to the production of an autobiographical text which aims to grasp the Self in all its complexity? These questions, which Murathan Mungan raises in his texts (Mungan 1999: 86), concern many of the writers of literary autobiographical texts in Turkey today. One

1 I refer in the following as "Mungan 1999" to the 4th edition.
2 For his life and work, see TBEA 2001/2: 571-572.

of the significant characteristics of Murathan Mungan's texts, as well as of other autobiographical texts of Turkish authors written in the last two to three decades, is a new awareness of and interest in the possibilities and limitations of "writing the Self."

As a general trend of contemporary Turkish literature, we can observe that autobiographical texts are becoming in a sense more like novels, and novels more autobiographical. Due to a new interest in postmodern literary experiments that allow all kinds of intertextual and metafictional games, Turkish writers frequently use autobiographical elements as modules in their fiction. For instance, in Leylâ Erbil's latest novel *Cüce* (The Dwarf), published in 2001, the writer enters the text by using her own signature as a name for one of her main characters.[3] Autobiographical elements are also part of the postmodern metafictional games of novelists like Orhan Pamuk or İhsan Oktay Anar, who give little hidden hints to their own life stories in their texts. Other authors, like Metin Kaçan who became known by his debut novel *Ağır Roman* (A Serious Novel) in the early 1990s, even owe their popularity–at least partly–to the declared connection of their fiction with their own lives. This can go far beyond the borders of good taste and moral acceptance in Turkish society. In Spring of 2003, Hasan Öztoprak, an author who had been previously known as a literary critic, was sharply criticized for his public announcement revealing the relation between his debut novel *İmkânsız Aşk* (Impossible Love) with his own life. What made his case especially scandalous, however, was that he publicly "outed" a famous young Turkish novelist claiming that she was the woman whom he had depicted in his book as being the one who "destroyed" his marriage.[4]

The hybrid character of autobiographical texts which places them somewhere into the wide space between fact and fiction is in Turkish sometimes expressed through the term "*anı-roman*." In my opinion, to translate this term as "autobiographical novel" does not do service to the Turkish phrase. This is mostly due to the fact that the emphasis in *anı-roman* is still on the autobiographical, as the authors partly fulfill the conditions of Lejeune's "autobiographical pact" between author, narrator, and reader while using their real names as signatures. But what is alluded to in this term is the fictional character of remembrance: The experiences of the author-protagonist related in the text *may* or *may not* be based on reality. The *anı-roman intentionally* leaves a question mark on the "truth" of the related text, thus putting the text somewhere in the space between autobiography and novel. A good example of this can be found in Adalet Ağaoğlu's book *Göç Temizliği* (Migration Clean-Up), first published in 1985.[5] Ağaoğlu, born in 1929

3 Erbil, Leylâ 2001: *Cüce*. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

4 For two examples concerning the discussion in newspapers, see "İmkânsız aşk mı intikam romanı mı," *Hürriyet*, 27 February 2003, and the commentary of the writer Perihan Mağden entitled "Teşhir iptilası," *Radikal*, 02 March 2003.

5 I refer in the following as "Ağaoğlu 1995" to the 2nd edition.

and one of the most distinguished female novelists of Turkey, emphasizes in her book already on the title page that this is an *anı-roman*, alluding to the fact that there is a certain impossibility of remembering life in a "true" way. Further, she clarifies this in her book by relating how she discussed her memories with her mother, brothers, and aunts: Many things that she remembered as facts, they remembered as happening completely differently. While Adalet remembers her father once beating a neighbor, her mother says that she had stopped him before the fight broke out and persuaded him to come into the house. While Adalet remembers that the boxes of oranges her father brought from his journeys to Istanbul were locked up in a cupboard, and the children of her family were only allowed to take one at a time, her brother remembers that he had once eaten all the oranges within a few days and even had given them as presents to his teachers and friends. And while Adalet romanticizes the story of her Aunt's kidnapping by her future husband, her aunt persists that "I never in my life fell in love" and that she didn't go with her kidnapper of her own free will.

From these stories and others, Ağaoğlu concludes:

> It is impossible to write about the Self. For, first of all, writers can't write about their Yesterday's Self. They'll always try to load their Yesterday's Self onto their Today's Self. They will constantly look for hints in their Yesterday's Self, which confirm their Today's Self, and if they don't find them, they'll create them. For this reason, like events of the past, a person connected to these events, this certain time, and their relationships with the people contemporary to this time, also change their appearance. (Ağaoğlu 1995: 25; translations are mine)

Ağaoğlu goes on and claims that it is also impossible for a person to write about his or hers Today's Self:

> While they claim to be writing about themselves, they are either removing themselves and instead narrating the person they long and want to be (we have many examples of this), or they are judging themselves more than necessary, and questioning themselves more than they deserve, and they even find themselves guilty (we have few examples of this)... (Ağaoğlu 1995: 25; translations are mine).

The question of to what extent a fixation of the Self through a text is fiction, is also asked by other authors. They all refer to the multiplicity of the Self, to the changes it goes through in time, and to the impossibility of remembering the past and of perceiving the present in an objective way. The poet İlhan Berk emphasizes in his autobiography *Uzun Bir Adam* (A Tall Man), first published in 1982,[6] that he had no childhood at all, while later on in the text he goes on to declare that he could write 1,000 pages about his childhood. Berk, born in 1918, comes from a poor family in the provincial town of Manisa in the Aegean region. His father left his mother when he was still very small, and he grew up under difficult conditions with three brothers and two sisters. Despite this, as the

6 I refer in the following as "Berk 1997" to the 3rd edition.

only child of his family to finish school, he later became a schoolteacher teaching French and an ambitious poet. Berk remembers his childhood as a very unhappy one due to his father's absence, the much-closed environment in which he grew up, and the very poor conditions under which his family lived. His resorting to reading and writing, he says, is strongly connected to his unhappiness as a child–writing, for him, was a way that he could *shape his life* –so much, that text and author, fantasies and real events, fiction and fact, finally intermingle and become one. The last sentences of his autobiography underline Berk's understanding of his identity: "I see myself like this–me, who got into the text, me, who became the text." [7]

Contrary to İlhan Berk, the novelist Orhan Pamuk, born in 1952, remembers in his autobiography *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir* (Istanbul: Memories and the City), first published in 2003, his childhood in an Istanbul middle-class family as a very happy one. He writes, however, in constant awareness of the deceiving tricks of memory. For instance, while he remembers his childhood relationship with his elder brother as being highly competitive and somewhat abusive, his brother and mother proclaim that he has invented these memories for the sake of a good story:

> Years later, when I reminded my brother and my mother of all these fights and violence, they treated me as if I had, as I used to do, constructed a striking and melodramatic past for myself in order to be able to write something interesting. They were so convinced that I finally shared their opinion and thought now, too, that as usual my fantasies had had a stronger influence on me than life. Therefore, the reader who reads these pages should keep in mind that I sometimes miss the right measure, and that I sometimes–just like the unlucky paranoiac who is aware of being ill but cannot get rid of his hallucinations–cannot escape my fantasies. However, for a painter, not the realism of things is important but their shape, and for a novelist, not the sequence of events is important but their arrangement, and for a memoirist, not the truth of the past is important but its symmetry (Pamuk 2003: 275; translations are mine.

The "symmetry of the past," according to Orhan Pamuk, is for the writer of an autobiographical text even more important than "truth" itself. Aware of the fact that any kind of universal truth is inaccessible for the individual who is limited through time and space and is therefore only able to see the world in the cutout fragments of a personal lifetime, the writer of an autobiography has to construct his or her past and give it a distinctive shape, a personal symmetry. Orhan Pamuk's personal symmetry as described in his autobiography is shaped to a large extent by the close interweavement of his biography with his hometown, the city of Istanbul. As already indicated by the title of his book: *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, Pamuk sees the geography of Istanbul, its architecture and its history, as a border place between east and west, as crucial for his life experiences and his identity as a Turkish writer. Perhaps more than any of the other authors men-

[7] "Böyle görüyorum işte kendimi, bir yazıya vurmuş, bir yazı olmuş beni" (Berk 1997: 99)

tioned here, Pamuk mixes elements of his real life into his fiction. The city of Istanbul, where Pamuk–with an interruption of three years when he stayed in New York–has lived ever since his childhood, is not only the place that forms his autobiographical "symmetry," but also the central place in Pamuk's novels. Streets that Pamuk lived or still lives on and houses he knows usually form the locations where the action takes place, and the author seems to find a special pleasure in placing himself or members of his family as figures into his texts.[8]

In the beginning, I discussed Murathan Mungan's memoir of the stuffed deer. It is a complex memoir as it confronts the reader with doubts on several levels: Mungan himself raises doubts on the ever-possibility of truth through his parable on the interchangeability of fact and fiction through time. But what makes us sure that he does this by telling us a "real" event of his childhood? A reader who has read some of Mungan's works knows that he uses the figure of the deer frequently in his fiction. So, couldn`t this memoir be completely fictional, just being invented "for the sake of a good story," just as Orhan Pamuk confesses to do sometimes? However, as all the above-mentioned authors agree that a narration of the "truth" is inaccessible for an autobiographical writer, the question of whether Mungan`s autobiographical story sticks to the facts is the wrong question to ask. Important is, as Orhan Pamuk puts it, the ability of autobiographical writers to form with the help of their fantasies a symmetry of their past, to give their lives a shape through their fiction.

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[8] As, for instance, in his historical novel *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (My Name is Red) from 1998 where he, his brother, and his mother form a family in which the two children are constantly quarreling and competing for the love of their mother, just as described in his autobiography.

Turkish Literature in Comparative Perspective

The "Autobiographical Space" in Orhan Pamuk's Works

Catharina Dufft

> Künstlerische Produktion, die in dem Impuls wider die Verhärtung des Lebens nicht sich beirren läßt, die wahrhaft naive also, wird zu dem, was nach den Spielregeln der konventionellen Welt unnaiv heißt und freilich so viel von Naivetät in sich aufbewahrt, wie im Verhalten der Kunst ein dem Realitätsprinzip nicht Willfähriges überlebt, etwas vom Kind, ein nach den Normen der Welt Infantiles (Adorno 1998: 500).
>
> Car les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus (Proust 1927: 13).

Introduction

This paper plays with the idea of the imagined "autobiographical space" of Orhan Pamuk and how it has influenced his work. In order to define my use of "autobiographical space," I will refer to Philippe Lejeune, who produced the classical definition of the term. With due regard to his definition, I will modify his approach by interpreting it in a more literal sense, as a *real* space, and thus will connect the local environment of the artist's childhood with his later works. In order to do this, I will consult Theodor W. Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* (1970), which emphasizes the importance of childhood for artistic creativity, and will briefly highlight some of the autobiographical aspects which are found in the works of Marcel Proust. Following this, it will be possible to demonstrate that all three authors, Pamuk, Adorno, and Proust, incorporated their childhood experiences into their later works and thus extended their early "autobiographical space" into their future-life as a source for creativity.

Later, I will examine how my theory applies to Pamuk's and Adorno's works by focusing mainly on Adorno's essay "Amorbach" (1967) and Pamuk's autobiographical short story "Pencereden Bakmak" (Looking Out of the Window, 1999). On the basis of these two texts, I will examine various aspects of these "autobiographical spaces" of Adorno, and in particular, of Pamuk.

Definition of the term "autobiographical space"

In *Le Pacte Autobiographique*, Philippe Lejeune defines the term "espace autobiographique" as the space derived from the interaction of the totality of an author's work. Thus, in addition to an autobiographical story in a strict sense–that is, a story where the congruency of the author's and the protagonist's names are given–the entire work of an author has to be taken into account, including novels, letters, diaries, etc. (see Lejeune 1975: 165-190)

In the case of Orhan Pamuk, we can state that his work in its entirety has yet to be completed. Therefore, I will not adhere to Lejeune's broad definition, but rather take the term in a more literal sense, and concentrate on Pamuk's early childhood as portrayed in the story *Pencereden Bakmak*; in addition, I will incorporate into my analysis Pamuk's essays from *Öteki Renkler* (The Other Colors, 1999), and a recent interview by the author. [1]

For the purpose of this article, I will define "autobiographical space" as a space derived from childhood–a place that is directly linked to, and associated with, the author's childhood. For Pamuk, I will define this space as the district of Nişantaşı, a modern, Western-oriented, central part of Istanbul. Pamuk is quite familiar with this space since this is where his parental home is located, where he spent the formative period of his childhood, and where he currently resides. And it is Nişantaşı of the 1950s that serves as the main setting in his autobiographical short story, "Pencereden Bakmak." Certainly, Nişantaşı is a recurring location in his other works too, playing a central part in *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (Cevdet and His Sons, 1982) and *Kara Kitap* (The Black Book, 1990). Furthermore, Nişantaşı, as a background, appears in *Yeni Hayat* (The New Life, 1994), *Kar* (Snow, 2002), and *Sessiz Ev* (The House of Silence, 1983). The same holds true for the familial and childhood aspects; not only in "Pencereden Bakmak," but in most of Pamuk's novels we find similar structures, especially in *Kara Kitap* and *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (My Name is Red, 1998).

It is clear that some aspects of Orhan Pamuk's writings can be traced back to the "autobiographical space" of his childhood. This space is attributed to his ability to discover the "virtual space," which I define as being the inner space which results from the outside-"autobiographical space." Only the author himself has access to this space, which serves as a source for creativity and establishes the aesthetical distance needed to produce art, or to produce the "fictitious space." It is within this space that his novels are set, and the only space we as the readers have access to. Thus, the "fictitious space"–here as observed in "Pencereden Bakmak," while still in a Lejeune-like manner in an interaction of *all* texts by the author–serves as the basis for the whole theory of an "autobiographical space."

In order to demonstrate how the connection between a certain space and childhood is later on transformed into an inner or "virtual space," I will refer to three artists: Marcel Proust, born in 1871 in Auteuil in France, Theodor W. Adorno, born in 1903 in Frankfurt am Main in Germany, and Orhan Pamuk, born in 1952 in Istanbul. Where their lives differ in many aspects, with them

[1] It should be noted that Orhan Pamuk's childhood-memoir *İstanbul. Hatıralar ve Şehir / Istanbul. Memories of a City* (2003) was not yet published when this article was written. Looking back, it can be stated that since İstanbul focuses partly on related issues as described in Öteki Renkler, the passages and interpretations referred to in this article would have been rather underlined by an earlier reading of *İstanbul* than confronted.

growing up at different times, in different countries, and under different conditions, they are similar in one sense: the experience of a sheltered childhood which would eventually influence their works.[2]

Adorno's Ästhetische Theorie *and how aesthetical behavior and childhood are interlinked*

In his unfinished work, *Die Ästhetische Theorie*, Adorno states that art and happiness are linked to infancy. Thus, only the child is capable of perceiving beauty without reflection; even though, at a later stage, reflection is also necessary to create and perceive art. Adorno uses this definition for aesthetical behavior in general: According to him, aesthetical behavior is defined by a receptive childlike attitude, an inexplicable moment of the awareness of beauty which comes with the arbitrariness of the mind. Though Adorno considers *archaische Rudimente* (archaic rudiments; see Adorno 1998: 109) as a condition for the awareness of beauty, he is in total agreement with Kant and Hegel that consciousness is indispensable. In art, both aspects stand side by side: non-rational, childlike attitudes interfere with rationalism and produce a symbiosis that can be mediated to the rational-minded subject.

Furthermore, coming back to the child aspect, there are, according to Adorno, certain events in life that can only be experienced through being a child, only at one place and this place will bear a certain meaning throughout one's whole life. Likewise, the experience of happiness, Adorno states in *Ohne Leitbild - Parva Aesthetica*, can only be made at one particular place, even if afterwards it proves to have not been unique.[3] This experience will never be replaced by any future happiness, because according to Adorno, it remains linked to its time and space where it was originally experienced. In relation to this, Adorno assesses Proust's major work as an autobiography that everyone could identify with as if it was his own:

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2 I believe that if we take into consideration the re-defining of the classical understanding of the term *Weltliteratur* (world literature), there is no reason why one should shy away from comparing a Turkish work to a French or German one. I agree with Damrosch that the leading characteristic of world literature today is its variability. Accordingly, world literature can be defined as, firstly, being an elliptical refraction of national literatures, secondly, a writing that gains in translation, and, thirdly, rather as a form of reading than a set canon of texts, or, in other words, as "a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (see Domrosch 2003: 281). For a useful definition of the term see also: Bachmann-Medick 2004.

3 Adorno 1967: 23 states: "Dennoch läßt einzig an einem bestimmten Ort die Erfahrung des Glücks sich machen, die des Unaustauschbaren, selbst wenn nachträglich sich erweist, daß es nicht einzig war."

The autobiography of everyone[4]

Indeed, Proust's fictitious village of Combray, modeled on the real village of Illiers, opens a space for all readers, as he entices them to dive into his narrations. Proust is able not only to evoke the reader's own fantasy but also his own memory. In his works, one of many passages that demonstrate this is the well known example of the taste of a Madeleine after being dipped into a cup of lime-blossom tea, which caused the narrator to recall his childhood memories, and finally, together with related sensations, would become *A la recherche du temps perdu* (or, at least, this is what the narrator wants us to believe). Even though this claim cannot be made for any work or any writer, it shows what role childhood can play in an author's work, and how it can be directly connected to and inseparable from a particular space. In this case, it is at Proust/narrator's aunt's house in Illiers/Combray where he first sensed the taste of the tea and the pastry.

Adorno's "autobiographical space" of Amorbach as an introduction to Pamuk's "autobiographical space" of Nişantaşı

In Adorno's case, Amorbach can be considered as his "autobiographical space," a small town, 80 kilometers from Frankfurt, where he spent important parts of his childhood with his family. According to Adorno, this place had such power that it would accompany him for a lifetime, even when he lived far away, as he did while in exile.

As mentioned above, Adorno stated that one could only realize one's childhood as an adult, as one is capable of reflection. In other words, citing Adorno once more, you have to become old to be aware of your childhood and childhood dreams. The dilemma stems from the fact that if only an adult can realize one's childhood dreams, it will always be too late to experience the happy and joyous event when it actually takes place.[5] This quote evokes another discovery by Proust, that the true paradises are the paradises which one has lost. However, for Proust, in regaining a lost paradise by recalling it lays a creative momentum resulting from this momentary conflation of a past and a present moment.[6]

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4 "Behielt er (Proust, C.D.) irgendwo recht, dann in dem Anspruch, daß sein Buch die Autobiographie eines jeden einzelnen sein müsse" (Adorno 1967: 161).

5 "Man muß altern, damit die Kindheit, und die Träume, die sie hinterließ, sich verwirklichen, zu spät" (Adorno 1967: 164-165).

6 Proust 1927: 13 and: "Or cette cause, je la devinais en comparant entre elles ces diverses impressions bienheureuses et qui avaient entre elles ceci de commun que je les éprouvais à la fois dans le moment actuel et dans un moment éloigné où le bruit de la cuiller sur l'assiette, l'inégalité des dalles, le goût de la madeleine allaient jusqu'à faire empiéter le passé sur le présent, à me faire hésiter à savoir dans lequel des deux je me trouvais; aux vrais, l'être qui alors goûtait en moi cette impression la goûtait en ce qu'elle avait de commun dans un jour ancien et maintenant, dans ce qu'elle avait d'extratemporel, un être

Adorno on the other hand is lacking the creative momentum. Thus, for Adorno, when one finally realizes that the happiness remains in the past, irretrievable, and, worse, irreplaceable, it is lost. For Adorno, one has to reach to the future to be able to understand the past.

To sum up, we can conclude that his "autobiographical space" consists of these two components: future and past:

The future that lies ahead

Not only did Adorno feel protected by his mother and family, but also by the place Amorbach itself. His little town had protected him so well, he writes in *Amorbach*, that it even prepared him for places that stood in total opposition to it.[7] The experience he is referring to here is his first confrontation with electricity in Amorbach during his childhood. He explains that as a child, while sitting on a mountain at dusk, from where he had a birds-eye view of his small town, he experienced a shock when all of a sudden the lights came on, allowing him to see electricity for the first time in his life. This experience made him aware of the possibility of unexpected changes in a world that until then he had considered safe and well known. It was a shock, he recalls, that would prepare him for everything that was to come in his life. Here he refers to his later exile, which took place during World War II in the United States, a place to which he had always kept a certain distance, and the modernity and technical progress of which he always questioned.

Similarly, years later, following his return from exile in America, while strolling through Paris in 1949, the sound of his footsteps on the cobblestone brought back memories of his hometown. This made the exiled Adorno feel as if he was at home in the big city and that Paris had more in common with Amorbach than it did with New York (see Adorno 1967: 22.).

Looking back, we come to the second aspect:

The past that links to history

Räumliche Nähe wurde zur zeitlichen (Adorno 1967: 26), "spatial proximity became temporal," writes Adorno, a statement which he relates to another childhood experience that took place in Amorbach. The taste of freshly shelled nuts given to him as a child evoked his imagination and transferred him back to sixteenth cen-

qui n'apparaissait que quand par une de ces identités entre le présent et le passé, il pouvait se trouver dans le seul milieu où il put vivre, jouir de l'essence, des choses, c'est-à-dire en dehors du temps" (Proust 1927: 14)

7 "So gut hatte mein Städtchen mich behütet, daß es mich noch auf das ihm gänzlich Entgegengesetzte vorbereitete" (Adorno 1967: 22).

tury Amorbach. Unlike his quiet home, Amorbach, due to the changing economic atmosphere in early modern Europe, became a stage for peasant rebellions. Thus, perhaps inspired by his later reading of Proust, Adorno imagines the nuts he was eating were a present from sympathizing peasant leaders of the revolts in 1525 in order to calm his fear of the future.[8]

Keeping in mind Adorno's "autobiographical space," Amorbach, and what it stands for, we shall now have a closer look at:

Orhan Pamuk's "autobiographical space" Nişantaşı

Benim merkezim (...) Nişantaş'tır (Pamuk 1999: 287), "my center is Nişantaşı," writes Pamuk in *Öteki Renkler*, a book containing the short story "Pencereden Bakmak" plus a collection of essays by the author. The modern, wealthy district of Istanbul, where he spent most of his early childhood and where his parental home is located, is the setting of many of his novels, and also of "Pencereden Bakmak."

According to Pamuk, everyone who is born and lived in a single city, or at one place for an extended period, carries a topographic image in his head, a personal map, with one district as a center, which is usually established in childhood. In this place, one feels safe and secure on the one hand, while at the same time there is a need to escape (Pamuk 1999: 287-288).

Thus, for Pamuk, we can say that his early "autobiographical space" consists of the following two components: staying in one place and escaping from it.

This conflicting attitude is well presented in "Pencereden Bakmak" by the image of about six year old Ali gazing out the window of his family's home in Nişantaşı. The character evokes direct associations with Orhan Pamuk the child, even if we do not have a correspondence between the names. So according to Lejeune's definition, which demands congruency of the author's and the protagonist's name, this story is not an autobiographical one in the strict sense. However, since there are strong similarities between Orhan Pamuk the child and the young Ali, this story crosses over into the realm of an autobiographical story. The parallels between Pamuk's own childhood and the protagonist Ali's are especially striking when Ali's father leaves his family and moves to Paris.

"Pencereden Bakmak" describes two days in a family's life, seen through the eyes of little Ali alias Orhan. The boy witnesses his father secretly leaving his mother, him, and his brother. On that day, he comes home from school early as he had persuaded his father on the previous day to write a letter excusing him

8 "In seinem Schultersack aber hatte Herkert frische Nüsse in ihren grünen äußeren Schalen. Die wurden gekauft und für mich geschält. Ihren Geschmack behielten sie das Leben hindurch, als hätten die aufständischen Bauernführer von 1525 sie mir aus Sympathie zugedacht, oder um meine Angst vor den gefährlichen Zeitläufen zu beschwichtigen" (Adorno 1967: 26).

from the inoculation-process at school. After arriving home, his father reveals to him that he is leaving secretly for Paris. For Ali, as he is the only one that knows of his father's future whereabouts, he is confronted with the fact that his safe refuge has come to an end. This leads to an inner conflict.

On the one hand Ali feels...

The desire to stay

... and would like to remain on his mother's lap, observing the world through the window from a safe and secure perspective.

This is vividly demonstrated in a passage of the story where Ali gets into the little, cozy space between his mother's body and the window and gazes with her out the window, as if he were expecting his father's return as well. Even though the child feels the sadness of the mother, who in the meantime knows that her husband has left, he does not tell her where his father has gone. But he now sees the world beyond the window through the eyes of his mother–who has lost all hope of her husband's return–as sad, rainy, and deserted. At the same time, he feels content being so intimate and close to her, being on the inside, and not on the outside. Only hours later, when everybody is sleeping, Ali gets up, joins his mother once more, who again is staring out the window, and he tells her everything he knows.

On the other hand Ali feels...

The wish to escape

...and longs to get out of his closed universe, step out into the world–just as his father did.

The fact that for at least one day he was the only one that knew about his father's trip gives him, beside a vague sadness, a feeling of collaboration with his father and, as a result, a feeling of power.

Also, his father was the only member of his family who knew he did not get his shots that day. Beside the big secret of his father's leaving for Paris, he also holds his own secret about missing school and his shots. This gives him extra power, insofar as he can now beat his older brother easily when they played football after dinner, since his brother is obviously weakened by the inoculation.

It is not the only trump card that Ali, who is used to losing against his brother, holds in his hands now. This is symbolized by the way he changes his attitude playing *alt mı üst mü*, "top or bottom" with his brother, a game about gaining and losing little chewing gum pictures portraying personalities from all over the world. After Ali had caught his father in the act of leaving his house and family, his father gave him two liras, which Ali immediately invested in an extra pack of chewing gum, which of course no one knows about.

Later on, in their maternal grandmother's house, Ali keeps on losing–mainly because of the unfair rules his older brother has established. However, despite this, he does not break down and cry. But finally, Ali loses his temper and burning with rage throws all the picture cards away while secretly keeping the most wanted card of the game, the "91 Lindbergh" that came with the chewing gum he had bought with his father's money. When he shows the picture to his brother on their way home, the brother excitedly asks him where he got it from. Ali tells him both his secrets, feeling a sense of pride about the special bond that he has formed with his father. During the struggle for the "91 Lindbergh," which immediately follows Ali's revelations, he manages to keep this last card from his brother's clutches.

Orhan Pamuk's prolonged "autobiographical space": the "virtual space" and "fictitious space"

This theory of these two aspects–wanting to stay on the one hand and wishing to escape on the other hand–can also be applied to Orhan Pamuk's own life as we understand it from various essays in *Öteki Renkler*. In one passage, Pamuk refers to a similar situation. After his father disappeared to Paris when Orhan was six or seven, several months passed before he would ask his family to join him in Geneva, where he settled and found work. In Geneva, not speaking French, Orhan and his brother instead of quarrelling now stuck together physically and mentally. At school Orhan remained silent and he spent his school breaks holding his brother's hand in the schoolyard.

Given these difficult circumstances, the boys were soon sent back to their paternal grandmother's house in Nişantaşı (Pamuk 1999: 331-3). In this context, Pamuk says that the Geneva experience (which tore him out of his safe universe) caused him to turn to his inner self. This inner space protected him from the hardships of life but at the same time kept him away from the richness and complexity of the outside world.[9]

We can even go one step further and say that when he had to step out into the world like a traveler, Orhan took his old familiar life, which he was born and raised in, with him and transformed it into a protective inner space that later on became his "virtual space."

Here, his journey began at his window: looking OUTSIDE from the INSIDE made him aware of the "real" world and would in a later stage of life induce his

[9] Pamuk 1999: 333: "Daha sonraki yıllarda başka şehirlerde, başka okullarda da yapacağım gibi, bu içe dönüş tepkim beni hayatın zorluklarından korudu, ama zenginliklerinden de uzak tuttu." (As I would do again in the following years, in other cities and at other schools, this reaction of mine of taking refuge to an inner world has protected me from life's difficulties, but it has, at the same time, kept me away from the richness of life.)

wanderlust. So we can say that from his home in Nişantaşı, he carefully discovers life, the rest of the city, and the rest of the world. The safe and secure home has been transferred into an inner room, into the writer's creative source.

From here he can go one step further and prolong his "virtual space" into a "fictitious" one, and thus transport the local surroundings into his novels.

Once having established his own, inner "virtual space"–that is, the transformed "autobiographical space" of childhood–having the needed distance, Pamuk can concentrate on this "fictitious space" and plunge into the plots of his novels. Having a "Western" oriented family background–on which he has referred to in various interviews–he always had a distant or perhaps a more objective point of view on his local "Eastern" environment. Being in the present, in the modern parts of Istanbul, he can dive into history and write brilliant novels as he did, for instance, with *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, which takes place in the old part of the city in the sixteenth century. Wandering around his city, discovering the world, he is open to inspirations and surprises, just as Adorno was, when the taste of the nuts transferred him back to 1525. Even the most intimate interfamilial interactions can at this artistic stage become abstract. In an interview with Ahmet Hakan, Pamuk states that what he writes about the relationship between the two brothers–Orhan and Şevket–and the relationship between Orhan and his mother Şeküre in *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, comes from deep with in; merely, put into a new context, into another time.[10]

Comparable with Proust's writing of "everyone's autobiography," Pamuk points out that the descriptions of the interpersonal relationship between the three–the mother and the two sons–are not just based on his own history, but are universal: "*Herkesin öyle bir annesi olmuştur. Herkesin böyle bir kardeşi olmuştur.*" (Everyone knows what it means to have such a mother. Everyone knows what it means to have such a brother.)[11]

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10 Hakan 2002: 35: "Ben de kardeşimle *Benim Adım Kırmızı*'da anlatıldığı gibi didiştim, (...). Pek çok abi-kardeş, kardeş ilişkisi böyle sorunlu, didişmeli, itişmeli, çekişmelidir. Bu çekişmeleri anlatmak istedim. Çok içimden geliyordu bu." (As described in *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, I also used to fight with my brother. Quite many brotherly and sisterly relationships consist of such problems, fightings, scrappings and draggings. It was really important to me to describe these quarrels.); 36: "Ama kendi hayatımda olan çok özel, çok mahrem, cok kırılgan şeyleri kendi oyunculuğum içerisinde 16. yüzyıla taşımaktan özel ve çok büyük bir zevk aldım." (But I took a special and great pleasure in transporting the very private, intimate and fragile things of my life playfully into the sixteenth century.) And: "Üç kişi arasında anne ve iki çocuk arasındaki en saf şeyi anlattım. Bu bir mağarada da olsa, bir çölde de olsa, üç kişi arasında en saf hikâye." (I told the purest thing between three people, between a mother and her two children. This purest story between three people could as well have taken place in a cave or in a desert.)

11 See Hakan 2002: 36.

Conclusion

From the analysis undertaken here, I would like to draw the conclusion that all three, Pamuk, Adorno, and Proust, rekindled their own childhood in their later lives and therefore were able to fuse this early part of their lives into the artistic and philosophical talent of their writing career. In addition, the inner space helped them to overcome difficulties: When Proust's illness got worse, he took his isolation as an opportunity to write his masterpiece in an extreme state of seclusion, being separated from the outside through thick blue satin curtains. As for Adorno, the inner space helped him to deal with criticism. He became almost immune to misunderstandings and protests concerning his philosophical or musicological lectures. Finally, Orhan Pamuk frankly admitted in the above mentioned interview that he does not intend to leave his "ivory-tower," as isolation from everyday life, politics, and so on gives him the space to concentrate on his profession: writing.[12]

In conclusion, during their childhood, in which they were raised in a well protected environment, they retreated into their own space, which created a certain distance from everyday life outside, and, in a later stage of life, would be prolonged into a personal inner space, their "virtual space" to which only the artists themselves had access. Thus the "autobiographical space" gave them the opportunity to develop the necessary aesthetical distance to observe the environment and surroundings from an outsider's perspective. These specific points of view gave them the ability to narrate in a detailed and well-observed way, subtly criticizing human conditions and pointing out its absurdities and shortcomings.

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[12] It should be noted, however, that Orhan Pamuk's political and social engagement is remarkable. Based on various statements he has made during the past two decades, it becomes obvious that Pamuk often breaks out of the private and enters the public realm.

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Writing the Self, Choosing a Language

Non-Arabic Autobiographies by Arabs, non-Turkish by Turks

Stephan Guth

Before writing an autobiography (or any other kind of self-account, e.g., an autobiographical novel), an autobiographer has to think about many things: the events to be told, the experiences to be described, the feelings to be recorded, the arrangement of the material, the style in which to narrate, and so on. However, probably for the great majority of authors *one* thing will not be in question: the language in which to write their life accounts. Yet, there are also a number of autobiographers who, for some reason or other, are lucky to have been endowed with the gift of bilingualism. While I consider them as being "lucky" and possessing a "gift," the bilingual autobiographer might think differently about this. He, or she, may regard this as a heavy weight on his or her shoulders, and not as a gift but rather a curse or an evil spell since each of the two languages form a specific part of his/her self, each of them stand for a world of their own, while both are being lived concurrently, or side by side. For the autobiographer having to decide on one of them means to somehow suppress the other (at least partly, because the two worlds or identities certainly also overlap to a great extent). Therefore, under the premise that as a bilingual autobiographer you really *want* to give the reader an insight, as comprehensive and sincere as possible, into your experiences, you are faced, as far as I can see, with three possible choices:

1. You could either write an *essentially bilingual* account. This would be the most sincere thing to do, probably, but you would have to accept the fact that your autobiography would be understood only partly, since readers lacking the same command of languages as you have would be able to read only those passages that are written in the language they know. Even worse, with a decision for a bilingual narrative you may perhaps deter the majority of possible buyers from buying your book *from the very beginning*—just imagine a book written, e.g., half in English, half in Japanese. Not to speak of the fact that it is quite improbable that such a book should ever see the light of day, since only a publisher with a remarkable degree of mental derangement would let himself in for such a financially disastrous project.

2. The second choice is to write *two* autobiographies, one for each of your two languages. The feeling of comprehensiveness and adequacy would then perhaps not be as complete and satisfying as with a bilingual narrative, the two worlds or identities merging into each other not integrally but only subsequently, and your person seen in its totality again only by those who read both languages (and, in this case, are also ready to spend the money for *two* books). While a real bilin-

gual autobiography has not come to my attention so far, I do know of at least one author who has written two, if not "real" autobiographies, at least highly autobiographical narratives. The Algerian author Rashīd Būjadrah (Rachid Boujedra) wrote his first novels in French and then shifted to Arabic in the early 1980s. His third novel written in Arabic, *Layliyyāt imraʾah ʾāriq* (which may be translated as "A Sleepless Woman's Nighttime Journal"), was published in 1985 and appeared two years later in the French version entitled *La pluie* ("The Rain"). Debbie Cox from the University of Oxford has compared the two versions in a fascinating study, which highlights the significance of making the choice of one language over the other. She writes:

> Even allowing for a fairly loose translation of the Arabic, a close textual comparison reveals at least 130 occasions on which differences occur between the Arabic and French texts. Given the relatively short length of the novel, this gives some indication that the French text is less a translation of the Arabic than an adaptation of the work, containing extensive variations and changes of emphasis. The differences range from small and apparently insignificant details to sections up to 5 pages in length which present completely divergent accounts of events. The differences between the two texts are relevant to a consideration of autobiography because of their implication for the differing elements of identity projected by each text, and the relationship of the texts, and the author, to different contexts of production and reception (Cox 1998: 220).

3. The majority of bilingual autobiographers (or authors of autobiographical novels, as the case may be) will however decide neither on a bilingual narrative nor on two monolingual versions; instead, they will stick to only one language. This current study will deal with this category. To be more exact, I have been looking at some texts written in English, German, and Hebrew, and not, as it would also have been possible, theoretically at least, in Arabic or Turkish. These are Edward Said's autobiography *Out of Place* as well as three pieces of highly autobiographical fiction: Mona Yahia's novel *When the Grey Beetles Took Over Baghdad*, Sayed Kashua's *ʿAravīm rōḳedīm* (i.e., "Dancing Arabs"), and Emine Sevgi Özdamar's *Mutterzunge* (i.e., "Mother Tongue"). As there are no Arabic or Turkish "doubles" of these accounts, we are not in the position to compare a version written in one language to that written in the other, as Debbie Cox did with Rashīd Būjadrah's texts. What we *can* do however is to look, within the monolingual accounts, for hints pointing to the motives which may have effected the authors' decisions to write in English, Hebrew, or German, rather than Arabic or Turkish.

Implied in these decisions are of course acts of taking sides. What the authors take sides with, or decide against, naturally may differ from case to case as considerably as the reasons why they do so. In the present article, there will be room to discuss only four exemplary positions.

*Mona Yahia (*1954),* When the Grey Beetles Took Over Baghdad *(2000)*

Mona Yahia's protagonist Lina, like the author herself, is an Iraqi Jew who grew up in Baghdad in the 1950s and 1960s not only with her mother tongue, the Jewish Arabic dialect of Baghdad, but also with Hebrew and English, both of which were taught from the beginning in the Jewish School that Lina/Mona attended.

The novel tells the story of Lina's childhood and early youth, i.e., of a girl growing up as a member of the Jewish minority in an atmosphere which was becoming more and more hostile to that community. After the anti-Jewish pogroms in the early 1940s, and a worsening of the situation in the wake of the foundation of Israel in 1948, some 300,000 Iraqi Jews emigrated, most of them to Israel. Those who stayed had to suffer even more, especially after 1967. Lina, who was then just entering puberty, had fallen in love with Lawrence, the son of their British neighbors, and was fond of everything fashionable that she came across in the French journal *Nous Deux*. And it was this young girl who witnessed her friends, acquaintances, and also her own brother being arrested, Jewish shops being forced to close down, Jewish students barred from studying at university, and her father losing his job. Finally, some Jews were executed for alleged treason, their corpses displayed in public, after obvious torture, and among them was Lina's swimming instructor and her brother's table tennis partner.

Before the family eventually succumbs to the ever-increasing anti-Jewish hostility and before the novel ends with their flight to Iran, we come across a dialogue which is highly significant with regard to the question why Mona Yahia may have written her novel in English, not in Arabic. In it, Lina explains to her friend Selma why she has decided to systematically erase Arabic from her life:

[Selma:] Drop your voice, Lina, we're in the street!

[Lina:] But that's precisely what I'm talking about. Arabic has been silencing us for the last fifteen years! It's my turn to silence it. […]

[Selma:] You're talking nonsense, crap […] Your language's not a piece of clothing you can just shed! [...] Arabic's in your tongue and in your ears, p-h-y-s-i-c-a-l-l-y! [...] Can you laugh at English jokes, do you understand French puns? It's as if… as if your whole life is stored in your mother tongue.

[Lina:] Including fear. If I forget Arabic, I might forget what fear is…

[Selma:] [...] You'll always live in translation, forever a foreigner in your own mind. [...]

[Lina:] Better a foreigner in a free mind than a prisoner at home.[1]

1 Yahia 2000, ch. "The Dictionary of Hatred." (Since there are a number of new editions with different paginations, I am quoting by chapter, not by page number. This will also facilitate to find my references in the many translations that have been made into various languages.)

Arabic, for Lina (and we may safely assume, for Mona as well) is the language of an oppressive regime that has been trying to silence the Jewish minority for many years. Although it is her mother tongue in which her "whole life is stored" and without Arabic she will have to face a "life in translation, forever a foreigner in [her] own mind,"[2] Lina is unwilling to bear anymore what she associates with Arabic in the first place–fear. She once could love Arabic,[3] but the regime has deprived it of all its beauty, or at least added the aspects of horror and cruelty and made them overwhelm all the other positive features. In order to regain room for freedom, Lina/Mona has to give up, or even destroy, that part of her identity which is contained in the Arabic language.[4] In this respect, Mona Yahia's situation is similar to (though not identical with) the one, e.g., German authors of the World War II years and the early post-war period found themselves in. For many of them, the German language was losing, or had lost, its "innocence" through what the Nazis were able, or had been able, to abuse it for. There is a famous poem by Bertold Brecht, written on the eve of World War II (1938), in which the following verses on language are to be found:

> Wirklich, ich lebe in finsteren Zeiten!
> Das arglose Wort ist töricht.
> [...]
> Was sind das für Zeiten, wo
> Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist.
> Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!
> Der dort ruhig über die Straße geht
> Ist wohl nicht mehr erreichbar für seine Freunde
> Die in Not sind?
> [...]
> Die Sprache verriet mich dem Schlächter. [...][5]
> (B. Brecht, "An die Nachgeborenen")

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2 The problem of losing one's self when giving up natural language has been explored by Eva Hoffman's signal memoir *Lost in Translation* (1989), cf. Besemeres 2002: 9.

3 Especially when spoken by persons to whom she was emotionally attached. There is a lot of sympathy, e.g., in the way she describes the verbosity with which her swimming instructor usually "seasons" his commands and comments during the lessons in the Tigris river ("Let me exaggerate a bit, can you speak Arabic without exaggerating, anyway? Life is boring, kids, so you have to season it with fantasy."). There are other passages in the novel, however, where Arabic appears in a cruel context. Lina asks herself for some time why, among the languages she knows, only Arabic has a dual form; this question is answered, suddenly, in an anatomy lesson at school when the children have to dissect a frog that has not been killed before dissection but only been anaesthesized. Observing how the frog's legs are pinned to the desk, Lina suddenly has the idea that the Arabic dual reflects the body's symmetry (beginning of ch. "The Anatomy of Hope").

4 Cf. Spoerri 2002.

5 "I am living in dark times, indeed! / The guileless (unsuspecting) word is foolish (stupid). / [...] / What kind of times are these times where / talking about trees is almost a crime. / Because it includes keeping silent about so many misdeeds! / The one who is crossing the street over there / Is probably nomore in reach for his friends / Who are in trouble? / [...]

As a member of the persecuted minority, Lina does not experience the same feeling of guilt as German authors did because they belonged to the majority; but the horrors of the past stick to the language in her case in a similar way.

In a moment like this, when one's language becomes the language of oppressors and murderers, many authors decide to defend it against its usurpation and to preserve the cultural values of which the usurpers have deprived it. After some time in exile spent in careful consideration and hesitation, weighing up the pros and cons, they continue to write in their native language in order to give it back its dignity and save from extinction the values stored in its memory. This is what Thomas Mann did in his famous speeches delivered on BBC to German listeners (cf. Kucher 2003: 141), or what Ernst Bloch advocated for in stressing the fact that "one cannot preserve and develop a *Kultur* without talking in the language in which this *Kultur* has been shaped and lives,"[6] and this is what also some of Mona Yahia's Iraqi Jewish fellow writers did after arriving in their Israeli exile.[7]

Mona Yahia however, like others, decided to discard Arabic. While the above dialogue between Lina and her friend certainly gives sufficient explanation for her doing so, it does, however, not say why *English* may have become the language of her narrative. Having lived in Israel for one and a half decades, having served in the Israeli army, having graduated from university, and having worked as a psychiatrist in Tel Aviv, she is fluent in modern Hebrew. So, why English? There may be many reasons for her eventually preferring that language, but if I should judge only from the novel then I'd say it was, in the first place, because of the emotional qualities the English language had gained for Lina on account of her acquaintance with, and later love to, Lawrence, the son of the British neighbors in Baghdad. For Lina, the time spent in Lawrence's company is a time full of adventure, breaking taboos, getting initiated into secrets which the grown-up always tried to conceal from the children, and also the time when she first experienced sexuality. Already on the very first day, when she and the twelve year old boy first meet in the neighbors' garden, Lina returns home and, totally excited, tells her mother that she has been talking English all the day![8] When her parents notice that their daughter's attachment to the neighbors' son is "getting serious" they intervene; Lina senses that the main motive for them doing so is fear for the family's honor, but she cannot counter the argument her father gives as a pretext when forbidding her to see Lawrence anymore: under the difficult

/ Language has betrayed me to the butcher. [...]." As in this quotation, translations into English from other languages are my own.

6 "Zerstörte Sprache – zerstörte Kultur" in: Ernst Bloch (1970), *Politische Messungen. Pestzeit, Vormärz*, Frankfurt a.M., 277-299, here 277.

7 The most prominent among them probably being Samīr al-Naqqāsh. This author and some other intellectuals of Iraqi Jewish origin have been portrayed recently in a documentary by the Swiss-Iraqi film maker "Samir" (pen name), *Forget Baghdad* (2002, a Dschoint Ventschr production).

8 Yahia 2000: end of ch. "The English Club."

circumstances prevailing in Iraq during and after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, anyone having contact with the British would be suspected as being a foreign agent and traitor. Thus, the children are prevented from seeing each other, though Lina nevertheless continues to long for Lawrence. For a while they do not meet, without letting the boy know why. Nevertheless, when his parents decide to return to England, he comes to say goodbye to Lina and, in the cloud produced by the DDT disinfectant car passing by, he kisses her, in this way declaring his love to her in the moment they have to part.

Besides its association with love, English contrasts Arabic also because of its clarity and truthfulness as opposed to the truth-concealing verbosity of Arabic, cf. Lina's brother's comments on the Arabic *versus* the English way to "read" history as represented in the *Nuṣb al-Ḥurriyya*, the Freedom Memorial, on Baghdad's Taḥrīr Square.[9] Earlier in the novel, Hebrew shares with Arabic this truth-concealing quality, so that during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War the only report about the events which Lina's family believes in is the one broadcast in English on the BBC.[10] The clarity and truthfulness attached to English during these events may thus be an additional explanation for the author's preferring English to Hebrew.

*Sayed Kashua (*1975),* ʿAravīm rōḳedīm *(Dancing Arabs, 2002)*

This is again a childhood/early youth narrative, this time of a boy from a Palestinian village in Israel. As one of only two Arabs, he is allowed to attend an Israeli elite school in Jerusalem. When, in the first week at this school, his Israeli classmates laugh at him because of the way he dresses, because of his ignorance of table manners, or because of his inability to differentiate in pronunciation between the Hebrew *p* and *b*, he begins to hate his Arab background. For him, to be an Arab is possible "only in the form of wanting not to be an Arab,"[11] and therefore he decides after only one week to completely assimilate into the new surrounding and become more Israeli than the Israelis themselves. At first, this strategy seems to be successful. He becomes accepted among his schoolmates, finds some friends among them, and even has a Jewish girlfriend. But it isn't long before his belief in the possibility of becoming an equal member of the Israeli society turns out to be nothing more than an illusion. The girlfriend's parents persuade their daughter to end her love affair because in the long run it would be an obstacle to her career. No sooner has the narrator finished his secondary education than he has to find out that despite his intelligence, he will

9 Yahia 2000: ch. "Freedom Memorial."
10 Yahia 2000: ch. "Six Days, a War, and a Transistor Radio."
11 Roedig 2002: [2]. – Page numbers in square brackets shall refer to my print-out of the website.

not be allowed to continue his studies in a field he would have liked;[12] therefore, he chooses another subject. However, following the second Intifāḍa, he becomes increasingly depressed. With the Israeli society becoming more polarized, once again he is being treated like an Arab, in spite of his almost total assimilation. The hero becomes torn between his two identities, lost between the two fronts, belonging to neither (cf. Ecker 2002: [2]). On the outbreak of the second Intifāḍa, e.g., "he oscillates between his sexual attraction to Jewish women soldiers appearing on TV and his hatred for the Israeli army, between the wish to convert to Judaism and the desire to blow himself up" (Granzin 2002: [1]). An attempt to commit suicide fails; but this is not yet the end of his decline. He drops out of university, starts drinking, and eventually returns to the village from where he came. However, he can no longer identify with the Palestinian society, while finding that he also has no place in the Israeli society.

The main motive for Sayed Kashua's writing this highly, albeit not totally, autobiographical[13] novel in Hebrew rather than Arabic was certainly the fact that his major target group consisted of Jews, not Arabs, as he aimed to show the former "how unwanted an Israeli Arab basically is"[14] in Israeli society. Having studied philosophy and sociology at the Hebrew University, as well as photography at the Academy of Arts in Jerusalem, having worked as a film critic and columnist for the Hebrew weekly *Ha-ʿīr* (Tel Aviv), the author has an intimate knowledge of this society. Therefore, he knows very well that "in order to exert some influence in Israel, you have to write in Hebrew" (Avidan 2002: [1]). So, language choice for him, unlike for Mona Yahia, is instrumental rather than emotional; he wants to impress the Jewish elite.[15]

The success of his book in Israel has proved his choice to be the right one in this respect. *ʿAravīm rōḳedīm* was hailed as a new, sensational discovery in modern Hebrew literature (Parlament 2002), for Hebrew literature written by Arabs "is almost inexistent: the last time an Israeli Palestinian writer published a novel

12 Proud of his son, the narrator's father had wanted him to become the first Arab nuclear scientist to construct an Arab atomic bomb, or at least a pilot.

13 Both author and first person narrator were born and grew up in the same village, both attended a prestigious Israelian boarding school, both went to university, both are now living with wife and daughter in Bayt Ṣafāfah near Jerusalem, etc. The important difference between the two lies in the fact "that Kashua himself has obviously succeeded in getting accepted by Israeli society [..., whereas] his alter-ego fails" Granzin 2002: [1].

14 Schwarz 2002. – Other reasons for the choice of Hebrew were (according to Kashua's own words) the fact that there are very few Arabic publishing houses in Israel, and that he has been reading, from the age of fifteen, only Hebrew literature, so "it is much easier for me to write in Hebrew" than in Arabic. Avidan 2002: [1].

15 Cf. Avidan 2002: [1]. – The first incentive for Kashua's hero to learn Hebrew, however, was curiosity: after he had discovered, in a locked suitcase, old newspaper cuttings in Hebrew showing his father he wanted to know the secret of his father's past. Kashua 2002: ch. I/1. (I am using the German translation.)

written in Hebrew was in 1986"[16]–Anṭūn (Anton) Shammās' *ʿAravesḳōṯ* ("Arabesk"). So, Kashua, like Anṭūn Shammās before him, successfully occupied hitherto unoccupied literary terrain, thereby "writing the history of a whole generation of young Arabs into the Hebrew reading books" (Granzin 2002: [1]). Establishing in this way a counter-canon is a method of resistance and protest against Israeli/Jewish dominance that is followed also by other Arab writers living in Israel.[17] According to Shammās, and probably also for Kashua, this strategy is aimed at exerting a deeper influence on the Israeli public opinion than other strategies of opposition, especially resorting to violence. [18]

Kashua's novel is, however, not only critical of the Israeli Jewish society, but also–and not less so–of the Palestinian Arab society. The author rejects the claim that he wrote in Hebrew because he might have feared Arab reactions to his criticism. On writing in Hebrew, he says,

> I did not want to conceal anything from the Arabs, for the great majority of them have a good command of Hebrew […] They read Hebrew newspapers, watch Hebrew news on TV, and buy Hebrew books in Jewish bookshops […] (Avidan 2002: [1]).

But, in my opinion, his criticism of Arab society is so harsh and breaks so many taboos that it would have been very difficult to publish the novel in Arabic. The most offensive aspects are probably his representation of fellow Palestinians, the role of the father in Arab societies, of Islam, and of the protagonist as an anti-hero.[19]

To begin with the last, the narrator's mocking of himself (or Kashua's mocking of his main character) could have been, to Israeli Palestinian readers, the least objectionable of the four aspects, since the target of mocking is (at first sight, at least) the protagonist himself, not the Israeli Palestinian society, it is the anti-

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16 Granzin 2002: [1]. Shammās' ʿAravesḳōṯ had provoked similar reactions in the Israelian public, reactions that were far more vehement than at the publication of another, earlier, key work of modern Palestinian literature, Emile Ḥabībī's *al-Mutashāʾil* ("The Peptimist") which had appeared in 1974 in Arabic.

17 E.g., the Iraqi Jew Sāmī Mikhāʾīl (*1926), for whom writing "Arab" literature in Hebrew means challenging especially Zionist literature (which, according to the author, modern Hebrew literature has essentially remained). In a discussion following readings from his novels in Berne (17 March 2003), Sāmī Mikhāʾīl expressed his conviction that the Israeli reading public is also fed up with this conventional, "zionistically" restricted canon and longs for a broadening of their horizons.

18 When asked why he preferred to write in Hebrew, Shammās once replied by pointing to a short story by A. B. Jehoshua "in which a dumb Arab sets fire to a reafforested plantation close to a deserted Arab village. Here, Shammās said, the Arab has only the language of fire at his disposal" Szyska 1991: 24.

19 Cf. Stagh 1993: 127, where Stagh talks about obscenity, blasphemy, and political opposition as three major "minefields where the writer has to move with great precaution," as well as Cachia 1990: 175, where "a marked reticence to strike themes that may cast doubt on national unity" is stated for Modern Arabic literature.

hero who, because of his inferiority complex, "assimilates to the majority (the Jewish society) to such a degree that he can tell his life only as a joke."[20] Yet these traits are not restricted to the hero himself; they reappear in the society that he disgusts. What he, the educated intellectual, does is not much different, at a closer look, from the behavior of those fellow countrymen to whom he thinks himself to be superior. Having quitted university and working now as a barkeeper, the narrator and his Palestinian colleague, the waitress Shâdiyah, watch two other Arabs on the dance floor:

> They are really ugly, especially the small one with the moustache. He is swinging his ass around in his tight trousers in circular movements which ridicule not only himself but also everybody dancing close to him, [...] and especially me and Shâdiyah. If he had only a scrap of brain, he wouldn't even dare to dance. Why should Arabs like him dance in a disco? Don't they even realize that they are different, how little this suits them, how ugly they look? (Kashua 2002: ch. IV/10).

It is not by accident that the dancing Arabs of this scene have given the novel its title. It is a metaphor in which at least three aspects of the Israeli Palestinians' situation unite. It not only shows the shame felt by Palestinian intellectuals *vis-à-vis* what they experience as the backwardness of their own community (as compared to "civilized" Jewish society), but it is also characteristic of how ridiculous the hero's arrogance is towards those who are attempting to assimilate (in principle, at least) as he has done. This ironical distance notwithstanding, the text does not deny the hero the right to mock himself of his compatriots' behavior; for, if he is ridiculous, then they are, too.

Had Kashua written his novel in Arabic it would have been quite difficult for him to find a publisher since the latter would have run the risk of being accused of supporting a writer who aims to criticize his own people.[21] Especially so, since Kashua does not refrain from exposing his ridicule of his compatriots exactly in those fields which are the most sensitive of all because they provide the reservoir from which a positive identity and pride are derived, and which therefore represent the great taboos of Arab society: sexuality, the family, nation (Arabness), qne religion (Islam). For example, in terms of sexuality, the dance floor passage previously quoted continues like this:

> Especially the small one with the moustache who does not stop cracking peanuts and swinging his ass around. He does not doubt that he is a super-model and that every girl dancing on his side is a whore. Every time he orders a beer he points to a woman saying "She is Russian, isn't she?" (Kashua 2002: ch. IV/10).

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20 Review of Kashua 2002 by Ludwig Ammann in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 April 2003, summarized by Perlentaucher 2003: [1].

21 Cf. what the text tells us about Shâdiyah, a drop-out of Palestinian society with a Bedouin background. She had written a book and sent the manuscript to some publishers in Egypt, but never got a reply. Kashua 2002: IV/10.

This is a clear barb against that kind of "manly" behavior which has been, and obviously still is, a typical reaction of the colonized against the colonizer. The Sudanese writer al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ presented a masterly portrait of this type of personality back in 1966 in his famous novel *Mawsim al-hijrah ilā 'l-shimāl* (*Season of Migration to the North*), in the form of his character Muṣṭafā Saᶜīd, who undertakes a "retaliation campaign" against the British colonizer in the form of seducing their women, one after the other, and who eventually kills the one who refuses to surrender to his attempts at gaining superiority by subjecting the victims to his sexual desires–this Muṣṭafā Saᶜīd has since become a well-known symbol of a "machoism" which seeks sexual (i.e., symbolical) compensation for (actual) political inferiority.

Sayyid Kashua does not stop at the point where the "holiness" of traditional family structure is at stake. Almost no member of the narrator's family remains safe from his criticism; the most severe accusations are directed at his father:

> I will take my father to the court. I will open a case against him for having planted hope into my heart. A hope that has deceived me. [...] I will raise a claim against him for having told me during the Lebanon war that this is the great darkness before the great bright day. I laugh at him because every time they throw bombs on Gaza and Ramallah he says "It's over, now they are finished." [...] There is not the slightest bit of hope left in my heart, I am full of hatred. I hate my father, for it is because of him that I am unable to leave the country, it's he who has taught us that there is no room for us, that it is better to die on our land, that one must not give up. [...] Without all that rubbish which he has taught us, I could have left long ago (Kashua 2002: IV/5).

The father, i.e. the older generation, is also the one who holds up the idea that being Palestinian is something to be proud of, that "the land" is something "holy" and that on its preservation depends a Palestinian's honor, just like a family's honor depends on the chaste behavior of their women.[22] He is convinced of the Arab nation being something great, and of the Arabs supporting the case of their Palestinian "brothers" in solidarity and unity. After a trip to Egypt, where the father comes to know, for the first time, a part of the Arab world outside Palestine, his former idealism is shown to collapse totally; experiencing the Egyptians as a people who do not care very much about the destiny of the Palestinians, the father returns from this excursion into "reality" as a broken person.

Arab pride turns out here to be totally inappropriate, a false pride. A similar unmasking takes place with regard to religion, especially the new Islamic piety as an ideology of salvation. For the disillusioned protagonist, who is seeking firm ground after his attempt at assimilation has failed, a "return to religion," so *en vogue* these days, seems at first glance to be the easiest solution:

> During the last days I have been thinking of God quite often. Everybody returns to religion. In Islam, returning to religion is easier than in Judaism. You are allowed to stay in

[22] al-arḍ zayy al-ᶜarḍ: "The land is like honour," the father uses to say, "who sells the land sells his honor." Kashua 2002: I/12.

> the same house [...]. [...] an imam and a whore may live in the same house. In order to return to religion you have only got to wash yourself [i.e. practice ablution] and pray (Kashua 2002: V/3).

So, given the fact that there is no other hope, why not try Islam? The narrator lets himself in to accompany his friend ʿĀdil, one of the new converts from nominal Islam to a "true," practicing belief, to the Ḥijāz in order to perform the pilgrimage. He will, however, not only have to state, painfully, on their arrival that "there is no beer in Saudi Arabia, not even malt beer" (Kashua 2002: V/3), but what he observes in the believers is also unmasked as the naïve belief of children in what some authority tells them:

> [In Paradise] you get everything you want. You think of a pear, and immediately you find a pear tree in front of you. [...] In the Garden of Eden people sit around on a meadow the whole day, as in a park. When you think of women they come to you, and it is possible to think of women and eating at the same time. It is not clear whether you will get women like in Saudi Arabia. Probably not (Kashua 2002: V/3).

After visiting the tomb of the Prophet, the narrator confesses to ʿĀdil that the sight of the holy place has left no particular impression on him ("inside me, it is void, I have seen nothing but a green carpet on which surahs of the Qur'an are written"), and in vain has he also tried "to become part of the great circle of people dressed in white who constantly revolve around the Black Stone" (Kashua 2002: V/3). The sarcasm with which Kashua lets his protagonist report on the events that happened during the *ḥajj* is topped in the paragraph where, on their way back to Israel, his friend ʿĀdil wants to leave the bus in the middle of nowhere in order to return to Mecca:

> He was convinced that the Mahdi would come just now and that he would miss his arrival. When we reached the river Jordan, he said to me: "Maybe He is already in Jerusalem." But the presence of the Israeli soldiers and the border officials [...] convinced 'Adel that the Mahdi had not arrived yet (Kashua 2002: V/3: last paragraph).

All the issues just mentioned are very sensitive in modern Arab, especially Palestinian, consciousness, and it would have been quite difficult to find a publisher for the novel had the author written it in Arabic. Hebrew, thus, for Kashua is not only a "stepmother tongue,"[23] but also a language that grants him a greater freedom of expression.[24]

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23 "Stiefmuttersprache:" Avidan 2002.

24 The same is true for Anṭūn Shammās: "One of the main reasons that Shammās wrote Arabeskot in Hebrew was the freedom in Israeli-Jewish society–more than Israeli-Arab society–to criticize not just the other, but also itself. In this novel, Shammās offers some rather harsh criticism not just of Jewish society in Israel, but also of Arab society inside and outside Israel, and he was not willing to criticize his society in its own language," Elad-Bouskila 1999: 54. – Cf. also what Iranian author Said (pen name), who writes in German, holds: "Every language gives me additional room for development" (quoted in Kucher 2003: 129).

Edward Said (1935-2003), Out of Place *(1999)*

Like Yahia's and Kashua's text, Edward Said's *Out of Place* explores a childhood and youth lived between different cultures–in this case, between Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, and the United States. One of the many reviewers of the memoir is perfectly right in saying that at its center lie the author's "experience of continually being an outsider and the confusion caused by his multiple identities–Arab, Christian, and U.S. citizen" (Semcoop [2000?]), and we may also add: Egyptian and Palestinian. However, in spite of the multiplicity of identities and exiles/"exiles" that Edward Said shares with Yahia and Kashua and of which a dualism of languages is an integral part, the question in which language to write his autobiography probably did not cross his mind a single time. Like many Arabs who received higher education not in Arabic but in English (or French, etc.), Edward Said lacked the level of Arabic that such a project would have afforded. His command of the Arabic literary language *(fuṣḥā)* was by far not as unflappable as that of his English;[25] he had in fact lost much of his Arabic long before and would have been completely unable to express himself in that language in a way that would have been appropriate to his character and intellectual abilities.[26]

But even if Said's Arabic had been sufficient to produce an *Out of Place*'s equal in Arabic, he might have preferred English because of the *public* he wanted to address with his text. As a most politically-minded writer, he would have wanted to give a voice that is heard to a region whose (hi)stories tend to pass unnoticed and remain unknown in the West if they are told in Arabic only.[27] In that, his motives would not have been different to that of a number of other Palestinian writers before him. As Enderwitz states,

> [t]he call on the conscience of the West to do, at last, historical justice to the Palestinians has been the earliest of the motives which made the [Palestinian] authors take up writing. [...] This motive is also an essential reason for the fact that a disproportionate

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25 This was also one of the reasons brought forward by Sayed Kashua not to write in Arabic, cf. note 14 above. – Kashua's case is not exceptional also with regard to the fact that many Israeli Palestinians do not have the opportunity to study in Arabic during their university years and therefore lack an academic level of writing in Arabic. (Thank you, Louis Fishman, for this remark.)

26 Thank you, Stefan Wild, for what you pointed out in your comment on my paper at the Istanbul conference. – So, the Arabic titles, few as they are, which bibliographies of Said's works do show are probably translations from an English original or have been edited from a draft in Said's own defective fuṣḥā.

27 The same idea lies at the basis of the choice of English made also by other Palestinians for their autobiographical accounts. In the case of Raja Shehadeh, e.g., a Western journalist convinced the Palestinian lawyer and founder of the renowned human rights organization al-Ḥaqq, that the Palestinians needed someone like him to raise public conscience for their cause in the West, and that this has to be done in English. The outcome was the memoir *Strangers in the House* (Shehadeh 2002). Personal communication by Nadja Odeh. Thank you, Nadja. – The idea is of course similar to that of establishing a counter-canon which we have met with already in Kashua's text.

> lot of Palestinian autobiographies were published originally in English or another European language.[28]

Strangely enough, there is no textual evidence at all to be found in *Out of Place* for any of the possible motives put forward so far for Said's using English. The autobiography leaves the reader without any internal clue as to why it is written in English, and not in Arabic. This is all the more astonishing for two reasons. First, as a text on identity, homelessness, etc., it makes clear, from the very beginning, the close interrelationship between language and identity. The narrative abounds in very detailed, very subtle and very sensitive observations concerning the question what was said or written by whom in which language under which circumstances or, e.g., which were the moments when somebody shifted from Arabic to English, refused to talk Arabic, did not remember a certain word in English, etc. It is therefore not by accident that the author approaches the linguistic dilemma of his life already on the second page of his account, immediately after having said a few words about his name. "I have never known," he writes,

> which language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one of the two really and without any doubt was mine. But I know that the two have always been together in my life, one resonating in the other sometimes ironically, sometimes nostalgically, most often correcting, and commenting on, the other. Each can seem like my first language–but neither is.

So, secondly, the text of the autobiography leaves the reader with the impression that Arabic and English for Said are absolutely equal, and the author continues, stating that in his opinion this "primal instability," as he calls it, is due to his *mother* who, as far as he can remember, used to talk to him in English as well as in Arabic. The total balance between the pros and cons of both English and Arabic is maintained throughout the text, which holds the narrated instances concerning each of the two languages, according to my reading, in a perfect equilibrium.

Given the fact that the language theme is surely one of the major topics the text raises every now and then, and given the plenitude of language-related events and the balance just described between Arabic and English, one wonders why Edward Said's text remains silent about the fact that for him English has become the language of writing.

From this, it has to be concluded that the decisive events which finally tipped the scales in favor of English must have occurred only later, i.e., outside the temporal scope covered by *Out of Place*, when the "primal instability" had ended and writing in English for Said became indeed more natural than writing in Arabic. It would have been appropriate to ask Said if this conjecture is right, but this

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[28] Enderwitz 2002: 62, cf. also ibid., note no. 142 and, for the aim of "reaching the hearts of people especially in the West via the 'human dimension,'" ibid.: 63. – See also preceding footnote.

is no longer possible: in 2003 he died from the disease of which the diagnosis in 1991 had convinced him to write this autobiography. The opening sentence of the preface tells us that he intended for *Out of Place* to be essentially an account about "a lost or a forgotten world." In any case, the fact that it is written in English has made the English-speaking readership the main addressee of his endeavor to save this world from oblivion.[29]

*Emine Sevgi Özdamar (*1946),* Mutterzunge *(1991)*

Quite a different case is Emine Sevgi Özdamar, the only Turk figuring in my selection. She was born in Malatya in 1946 and came to Germany at the age of nineteen, where she first worked in a factory for electric valves, but only in order to earn a living which enabled her to study theater. She wrote for the stage (*Karagöz in Almania*, 1987) and later also short stories and novels. (For further details about her life, cf. the contribution of Olcay Akyıldız in the present volume.)

Among the four bilingual writers included in my selection she is perhaps the one who comes closest to what I've termed "truly bilingual writing" at the beginning of my paper (cf. choice no. 1, above). But "truly, or essentially, bilingual" here does not mean that she writes both in German and Turkish; apart from a few words or, at most, some short sentences, her texts look perfectly German on the surface. However, a more profound analysis reveals a different reality. Her narrative combines German grammar with the Turkish way of thinking or saying something. A good example in this respect is the title of her first collection of short stories and essays, *Mutterzunge* (highly autobiographical and also highly indicative of the fact that the question of language is central to Özdamar's thinking; it is no accident that the title of this first collection bears a relation to language; for Kucher, the texts are in themselves narratological-linguistic reflexions[30]). The word "Mutterzunge" is formed from two components in total accordance with the rules which govern word formation in German. It is however a *literal*, one-to-one translation from Turkish *ana dili* and does not give the meaning of "mother tongue" in German, i.e., a language, but only of the speech organ of a mother (*ana dili* "mother tongue" in German would be "Mutter*sprache*"). The alienation effect[31] that accompanies this kind of "word process-

[29] I have been unable to consult Said's "An Ethics of Language," a review of Foucault's *The Archeology of Knowledge*, in *Diacritics* 4/2 (Summer 1974): 28-37. Although it may contain information related to the choice of language I would nevertheless hesitate to build an argument for a text of 1999 on one of 1974.

[30] Kucher 2003: 152. – Similarly, Seyhan 2001: 19 holds that *Mutterzunge* is one of the works which "critically engage questions of bilingualism and interlinguality and reflect on the relations of power and language".

[31] Cf., e.g., Angelika Burkhard's account of a literary soirée with Özdamar, in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, no. 46, 23 February 1991, where she characterizes the author's German as "seltsam verfremdet" (quoted in Kucher 2003: 151).

ing" makes the reader (or listener) aware that the customary way of looking at things, which corresponds to the customary use of the German language, is just one of many other possible ways to do so, and therefore produces creative energy and irritation.[32] At the same time, the polyphonic narrative technique enables the author not only to retain her "Turkishness" in a German structure (which, of course, is also hers), but at the same time it essentially becomes a cross-culture writing[33] in order to open up the German language to fantasy and all kinds of creative games with the language.[34] This is why her narrative, in spite of its "simplicity," often becomes very poetic and is successful in integrating–to quote only one example–pieces of Ottoman-style "wine poetry" into the text *as though* it were a German tradition. Writing in German thus does not restrict the author to only one part of her identity, but allows her to melt both into one, to live both at once; literary exile, and exile in general, is thus not only dealt with but essentially abolished (cf. Ette, in Sinai 2003: [2]). Apart from that, this technique provides a means for the author to convince the German reader that a bit of "Turkification" may also enrich the language as well as the society. An element which equally supports the feeling that "Turkification" is nothing to be afraid of is the fact that Özdamar's technique also has an amusing effect. It makes the reader smile at the outcome of such a "melting" of languages, "mentalities," and identities. Sympathetic humor (not ridicule!) also prevails when Özdamar writes about the problems she herself or her characters encounter in Germany because of Turkish being their "Mutterzunge." All these factors combine to promote the "acceptance of the otherness," of the "strange" and foreign.

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32 As Kucher 2003: 129 notes, plurilingualism in literature can often be observed to produce subversive side-effects. In Germany, this holds true not only for Özdamar but also for a number of other immigrant writers, the most "rebellious" among whom is probably Feridun Zaimoğlu. On the language he coined *Kanaksprak*, i.e. the broken German spoken by immigrant workers, especially Turks (derogatorily called "*Kanaken*" in German slang), and which was raised by him onto the level of literariness, Zaimoğlu said in an interview on German Radio International (Deutschlandfunk) in 1999: "Kanaksprak is an artificial language. It is a form of visibility. ... Part of that is also a combative gesture in language, a staccato or a hard beat, part of it are one-to-one translations [...], as well as verbal poses, but in the end there is, again and again, Presence, the right of every single person to his own, very individual being-there."

33 Kucher 2003: 130, points to the fact that, as a result of constant migration into Europe since the 1970s, there is now a considerable number of texts which, like Özdamar's, have two or more "worlds of reference" (Bezugswelten).

34 Cf. Ottmar Ette's finding that Özdamar "does not attempt to translate Turkish idioms into their properly German equivalents, but rather transforms and expands the expressive possibilities of German through a constant violation of grammatical and lexical norms" (Sinai 2003: [2]).

Resumee

A look, rather superficial as it had to be, at only four narratives is certainly not sufficient in order to draw conclusions on a systematic level. Yet, what I think this short glance at some autobiographies written by bilinguals has been able to show is a) how manifold the motives may be for Arabs or Turks to make use of a non-Arabic or non-Turkish language for their autobiographical writings, and b) that it might be worthwhile to study these motives in a systematic manner.[35] Furthermore, I hope that this contribution from the field of Oriental studies may have added some new aspects to the theory of autobiography written by bilinguals, or language migrants, in general, a theory which a considerable number of studies from other disciplines have already made great efforts to establish.[36]

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35 Gabriele Jancke has already started to do so in her field (cf. her contribution to the present volume).

36 For a short, but very comprehensive survey cf. the Introduction in Besemeres 2002: 9-35. The question of language choice in the autobiographical writing of bilinguals is of course only a sub-question of the question of language choice in literature and, in the end, of language choice in general. For the former cf., e.g., ch. 2 "Mehrsprachigkeit und Literatur", in Strutz & Zima (eds.) 1996: 113-226, Kremnitz & Tanzmeister (eds.) 1996, as well as for diaspora literature, among many others, Seyhan 2001. The problem of language choice in general is mostly approached from a very linguistic perspective, cf. e.g. the chapters "Dimensions of bilingualism" (Li Wei), "The description of bilingualism" (W. F. Mackey), as well as the whole section on Language Choice (several authors), all in Li Wei 2000: 3-25, 26-54, and 63-106.

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Imagining Autobiography: Mahmud Darwish, his Poetic Persona, and his Audience[1]

Angelika Neuwirth

1 Introduction

> I come from there. I return the sky to its mother when for its mother the sky cries
> And I weep for a cloud that returns to know me
> I have learned the words of blood-stained courts in order to break the rules.
> I have learned and dismantled all the words to construct a single one:
> homeland.[2]
>
> Anā min hunāk. ʿu'īdu s-samāʾa ilā ummihā ḥīna tabkī s-samāʾu ʿalā ummihā.
> Wa-abkī li-taʾrifanī ghaymatun ʿāʾidah.
> Taʿallamtu kulla l-kalāmi, wa-fakkaktuhu kay urakkiba mufradatan wāḥidah
> Hiya: al-waṭan.

The voice that claims a transcendent status, to come "from there," aspiring to the role of an mediator between heaven and earth and boasting the achievement of subverting language as such to form one particular name–is it the lyrical "I" of a particular poem, or is it the poet's very personal voice? The speaker is a liminal figure: he is no less than a cosmic agent in that he reconciles heaven and earth, a kind of Prometheus who shatters the symbols of ruling power structures, and the First Man, Adam, who on divine order gives everything its name. Is this poem purely poetic and thus a licitly hyperbolic articulation of an artist triumphing over a situation of perversion, or is it a covenantal and thus an autobiographical statement of "the poet of Palestine"? This is a controversial question among the readers of Mahmud Darwish's work. The following communication will shed some light on the problematic inherent in modern political poetry that has in Darwish's case invited an immediate and long-lasting re-interpretation in the sense that readers, or more often listeners, claim autobiographical validity for poetical statements presented in the first person "I." Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that by identifying Darwish with his poetic persona and raising him to the rank of a redeemer figure, they created a kind of poetic "meta-literary autobiography" for the poet from his poetical speech. Darwish has time and again defied this imposed autobiography; indeed, he refuted the allegation of such a mythic dimension by composing though not an autobiography in the strict

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1 An extended version of this paper has been published in German: "Hebräische Bibel und Arabische Dichtung–Mahmud Darwish und seine Rückgewinnung Palästinas als Heimat aus Worten." In: Neuwirth, Pflitsch & Winckler 2004: 136-157.

2 "Anā min hunāk" (I am from there), vs. 6-10, from: "Ward aqall" (Less Roses), 1986. In Darwish 1994: 326.

sense of the word, yet some divans that deserve to be considered as a kind of autobiography in the shape of a sequence of poems: *Li-mādhā tarakta l-ḥisāna waḥīdan* (Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?, 1995) and *Sarīr al-ġharība* (The Bed of the Stranger, 1999b)[3]. In these works, he critically revisits his early poetry–not succeeding, however, to erase the text of his persona's autobiography that has become his own "meta-literary" autobiography.

1.1 The poet between the individual person of the artist and the publicly claimed symbol

Mahmud Darwish[4] was born in 1942 in Northern Palestine in one of the villages that was destroyed in 1948. He was educated in both Arabic and Hebrew, and as a young man joined the editorial board of the communist literary journal *Al-Jadeed* in Haifa, and early on he had begun to write poetry with overtly political overtones. His coming-out as the outstanding voice of his community, however, can be attributed to his first long poem, *ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn* (Lover from Palestine), written in 1966, a poem which reflects an experience recorded in his early memoir *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādi* (A Diary of Daily Sadness), which according to my reading epitomizes his personal call to poethood:

> Suddenly you remember that Palestine is your land. The lost name leads you to lost times, and on the coast of the Mediterranean lies the land like a sleeping woman, who awakes suddenly when you call her by her beautiful name. They have forbidden you to sing the old songs, to recite the poems of your youth, and to read the histories of the rebels and poets who have sung of this old Palestine. The old name returns, finally it returns from the void, you open her map as if you opened the buttons of your first love's dress for the first time. (Darwish 1973: 140)

Lost times, the land, her beautiful name, forbidden old songs and histories of the rebels, poets singing about Palestine–material and textual components: the land, memory, and history converge to make up the homeland. What had been forcibly banned from the speaker's consciousness reemerges in a kind of "vision," whose erotic radiance restores to him reality in its full dimension. It should have been this "vision" that inspired him to write the poem "Lover from Palestine." Mahmud Darwish at that time was twenty-four years old. As a consequence of his growing fame as a poet with overtly political overtones to his poetry, he had been imprisoned several times, and it is reported that he wrote the piece during a stay in prison. Soon after the publication of the poem he was discovered by Ghassan Kanafani, the famous Palestinian prose writer who succeeded in smuggling the poems of a number of young Palestinian writers from Israel to Beirut and thus managed to introduce them to the broader Arab public. Kanafani presented his literary protégés as authors of "resistance poetry" and

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3 He has also published two memoirs: *Yawmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādi* (1973) and *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* (1986b), cf. van Leeuwen 1999: 259-268.

4 See for a bio-bibliographical survey, Embaló, Neuwirth & Pannewick 2000.

consequently, they were soon received as representatives of the movement of "committed literature" en vogue at the time (see Klemm 1998)–a label that Darwish would vehemently reject for himself just a short time after he had established himself in Beirut.

Increasing confrontations with the Israeli authorities, imprisonments, and house arrests had made creative work impossible for Darwish and finally induced him to leave the country in 1970 and eventually to join the Palestinian resistance movement in Beirut. During his exile in the city, which since the sixties enjoyed the rank of the cultural metropolis of the Arab World, he produced some of his most impressive poems, creating the figure of the *fidā'ī* (devoted fighter) or *shahīd* (martyr), an *alter ego* of the poet himself. Forced to leave Beirut with the expulsion of the Palestinian resistance movement by the Israeli army in 1982, Darwish chose Paris for his new exile, where he was to write his war memoir *Dhākira li-l-nisyān* (A Memory for Forgetfulness) and several collections of new, pronouncedly personal poetry. But whatever he wrote, he was to remain in the consciousness of his wider public as the voice of Palestine, the translator of those most intricate desires and aspirations of the Palestinians that could only be expressed poetically, through myths and symbols. It certainly came as a surprise that Mahmud Darwish, who for more than thirty years has been revered as the voice of Palestine, whose recitals attract thousands of listeners, whose divans reach innumerable readers over the Arab world, in 2002–six years after his return to the Arab world to settle in Ramallah and Amman–published a collection of poems in which he explicitly steps down from his rank of a mythopoeic poet of this people and questions an essential part of his own mythic creation.

2 Recreating the Promised Land: A Palestinian Genesis

What has been claimed for German romantic poetry seems to apply in some important aspects to modern Arabic poetry as well: "Since poetry is credited with a world-transforming and time-devaluating dimension, reflections about poetry often touch on eschatological horizons. The poet (in Novalis' work) bears the traits of the ancient poet Orpheus. Like Orpheus, he appears as a powerful magician who devaluates the laws of space and time, who connects between remote realms of being and invites all creatures into a comprehensive dialogue."[5] "The poet (in Novalis' work) occupies a privileged rank, since he commands a sort of mystical access to the Golden Age. He is capable of experiencing the unity of the ideal,

[5] See Valk 2003: 71: "Da der Poesie eine weltverwandelnde und zeitaufhebende Dimension zugeschrieben wird, rückt die Reflektion über ihr Wesen häufig in einen eschatologischen Horizont. Der Dichter trägt (im Werk des Novalis) die Züge des antiken Dichters Orpheus. Wie dieser tritt er als mächtiger Magier auf, der die Gesetze von Raum und Zeit außer Kraft setzt, entlegenste Wirklichkeitsbereiche mit einander verbindet und alle Geschöpfe in einen umfassenden Dialog eintreten läßt".

primordial world even through the most disparate phenomena of the present reality appearances. He is endowed with the exclusive gift of the analogical gaze thus realizing in the apparently unrelated phenomena of the empirical realm elements that unite them. He is able to de-cypher those enigmatic ciphers that are inscribed into everything earthly."[6] Although there is no topic of a Golden Age in Arab secular culture to reclaim, post-colonial poetry is markedly nostalgic. Poets endeavor to revert reality and recover the vision of a pre-colonial paradisiacal state of their living space beneath its real appearance that is disfigured through political circumstances (see Deyoung 1998).

2.1 The Land inscribed with Biblical history

This applies to Palestinian poetry in particular, which for its understanding relies–as Richard van Leeuwen has stressed–on the premise that land is the structuring principle to organize individual and collective perceptions of life. "There are various versions of history inscribed on the land, both by the occupier and by the Palestinians. The relations of power, however, imply that the Israeli version is dominant and that the Palestinian 'textual' homeland is threatened by elimination. What remains for Palestinians is not so much 'history' as 'memory,' which consists of recollections of childhood and of the exodus, emotions symbolizing the attachment to the land and the natural right of the Palestinians to the land" (see van Leeuwen 1999: 270). But these issues remain dispersed, lacking universal validity–that is, as long as no aesthetic catalyst is available. Here poetry comes in. The situation of exile which has been transformed–as van Leeuwen has pointed out–into "an emotional and intellectual disposition which affects every experience gives rise to an almost obsessive preoccupation with questions of identity (…). Palestinian identity has been denied and become disrupted, and among the tasks of the poet is reconstructing the identity by reintegrating it into the domains from which it was evicted: time, or the continuity of history, and place, the repossession of the homeland. This reintegration can only be achieved in one way: by recreating the two domains in texts, by enabling their essence to transcend a distorted reality and to return to their natural course of deployment" (Van Leeuwen 1999: 268f.). "In this way, poetry helps to restore and preserve the relations with the homeland, but, conversely, the land also be-

6 Valk 2003: 73-74: "Der Dichter nimmt (im Werk des Novalis) eine besondere Vorrangstellung ein, da er einen geradezu mystischen Zugang zum Goldenen Zeitalter besitzt. Für ihn ist die Einheit der idealen Ursprungssphäre auch in den disparaten Erscheinungen der gegenwärtigen Welt erfahrbar. Der Dichter besitzt die exklusive Gabe des analogischen Blicks und erfaßt in den scheinbar beziehungslosen Phänomenen der empirischen Erfahrungswelt ein verbindendes Element. Er weiß jene geheimnisvollen Chiffren zu entziffern, die allem Irdischen eingeschrieben sind."

comes the main inspirational source of poetry. Here the converging of the text and the land is completed" (Van Leeuwen 1999: 270).

But poetry in Darwish's case goes even a step further. Poetry is a response to a pre-existing writing that is inscribed on the land serving to ascertain the legitimacy of the dominance of the Others: the Hebrew Bible. There are many witnesses to that, one of whom, the American writer William M. Thomson, author of a work *The Land and Book* (1858) was recently rediscovered and discussed by Hilton Obenzinger in his study *American Palestine* (1999). Obenzinger has summarized this and similar works by stressing that "the country was considered strange, but it was a strangeness emanating from divine meanings waiting to be 'read' as they oscillated between sacred ground and biblical text, a strangeness considerably more intense than the mere excitation of the exotic expected to be found in the Orient, one redolent with meanings about the divine and the destiny of 'God's New Israel.' Palestine is 'where the word made-flesh dwelt with men,' as Thomson explains and as a consequence it 'is and must ever be an integral part of the divine Revelation.'" To quote Thomson himself: "In a word, Palestine is one vast tablet whereupon God's messages to men have been drawn and graven deep in living characters by the Great Publisher of glad tidings, to be seen and read by all to the end of time. The Land and the Book–with reverence be it said–constitute the entire and all-perfect text, and should be studied together" (Thomson quoted by Obenzinger 1999: 39). Obenzinger concludes: "American Protestants traveled to Palestine to read this entire, all-perfect text, to engage in a complex interpretive practice of reading a female land inscribed with a male pen that by the coupling of soil and story would provide evidence of faith and providence in a unified, eroticized entity, created by the traveler who has come with great purpose to 'read' it." Meanwhile, an extensive America-Holy Land Project at the Hebrew University has been established, initiated in the early 1970s by Moshe Davis, Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, Robert Handy, and other Israeli and American scholars who tend to view the nineteenth century history of the region as Israeli prehistory, expecting that the proper study of the western "rediscovery" of Palestine and the various pre-Zionist, Christian notions of "Jewish restoration" will prove the historical inevitability of the founding of the Jewish state (Obenzinger 1999:7).

It is true that Mahmud Darwish's public emergence as a poet, which may best be dated to the year 1966, predates the emergence of these debates as well as Edward Said's critique of orientalism and imperialism in the formation of western cultural and power relations in *Orientalism* (1978). Yet Darwish's extended cooperation with cultural and political figures such as Emil Habibi in the framework of the communist periodical *Al-Jadeed*[7] leaves no doubt that he was very early aware of the inseparable entanglement of text and land in the minds of the

7 See Embaló, Neuwirth & Pannewick 2000, s.v. Mahmud Darwish.

dominant society in his country, the Israeli Jews, an awareness that is also affirmed by his later published pre-exilic *Diary of Daily Sadness* from 1973.

In Darwish's view, as he has spelled out at a later stage, therefore, "poetry is essentially to strive to rewrite or to create its own Book of Genesis, to search for beginnings and to interpret myths of creation. It is through these myths that the poet can return to his origins and ultimately touch upon daily life in the present. History and myth have become an unavoidable detour to comprehend the present and to mend the gaps created by the violent usurpation of the land and its textual representations" (quoted by van Leeuwen 1999: 270). The master narrative of the eviction has to be de-narrated.

2.2 Darwish acting as the First Man, the writer of a Scripture

The Palestinian public–however exaggerated their desire to be represented by the poet–perhaps was not entirely arbitrary.

Let us look briefly at the poem that mirrors the above quoted experience of the recuperation of the land, and can indeed be read as a covenantal document. It starts with the line, "Your eyes are thorns piercing my heart" (*ʿUyūnuki shawkatun fī l-qalbi*), and thus obviously draws on experience that is not limited to the mere individual but that reaches deep into literary tradition. The Beloved's gaze at the poet's persona is the violent gaze familiar from the mystical ghazal[8]. The addressee of the ghazal, originally the great unattainable Other, the divine Beloved, has in the post-colonial era been re-incorporated in the image of the likewise unattainable–lost or occupied–homeland. It is therefore in the ghazal mood of addressing a high-ranking unattainable Beloved that the speaker addresses his homeland. But to be able to address "her," he has to first restore her to reality. In 1966, the name "Palestine" was still politically taboo, having been officially abolished with the foundation of the state of Israel. It was likewise taboo for the Palestinians of the West Bank after its annexation by the Kingdom of Jordan. There was nothing called Palestine existing in political reality.

It is no exaggeration to say that the poem *ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn* re-creates Palestine. The poem is shaped in the standard form of a *qaṣīda* with the sequence of three sections each conveying a different mood: a nostalgic *nasīb* lamenting the loss of a beloved, followed by a restraint description of a movement in space, a journey, *raḥīl*, portraying the poet regaining his mental composure, and culminating in a pathetic *fakhr*, a self-praise confirming the heroic virtues of tribal society. In Darwish's poem, the *nasīb* laments the absence of the homeland and the resulting muteness of her loved ones:

8 See for a detailed discussion of the intertextuality: Neuwirth 1999; see for ghazal in general: Bauer & Neuwirth 2005.

Your words were a song…
But agony encircled the lips of spring.
Like swallows, your words took wing.
Led by love, they deserted the gate of our house
And its autumnal threshold….

Darwish's *rabīl* section that leads to his imagined triumphal union with her presents a prolonged visual pursuit of the Beloved, which leads the poet through various sceneries of exile, suffering, and misery: to the harbor, locus of involuntary emigration, to abandoned hill-tops overgrown with thorn bushes, to the store-rooms of poor peasant houses, to cheap nightclubs, to refugee-camps.

I saw you yesterday at the harbor- a voyager without provisions…
I saw you on briar-covered mountains
- a shepherdess without sheep…
I saw you in wells of water and in granaries
- broken….
I saw you in nightclubs
- waiting on tables…
I saw you at the mouth of the cave,
- drying your orphan rags on a rope
I saw you in stores and streets,
In stables and sunsets
I saw you in songs of orphans and wretches.

The long sequence of visions of the Beloved in the state of need and humiliation eventually comes to a turn when the Beloved presents herself endowed with a clearly erotic emanation—as we know already from the poet's account of his experience at the seaside—as a sleeping beauty, displaying life in its most perfect aesthetic form:

I saw you covered all over with salt and sands,
Your beauty was of earth, of children and jasmine.

With this vision the speaker himself achieves a new state of mind: He regains his composure and swears an oath of absolute devotion to the homeland. He thus concludes—in the understanding of his listeners—a pact, an autobiographical pact so to say, with the Palestinian collective that is to be imagined behind that addressee. This oath, an overtly meta-textual section, placed exactly in the center of the poem, through a complex metaphor presents the process of poetical creation of the Other as a production of a textile, a garment for her made from parts of the body of the writer himself, thus constituting a kind of self-sacrifice:

I swear to you
I shall weave a veil from my eyelashes embroidered with verses for your eyes
And a name, when watered with my heart
Will make the tree spread its branches again
I shall write a sentence on the veil
More precious than kisses and the blood of martyrs
Palestinian she is and will remain.

The speaker in the poem thus acquires a mythical dimension, that of the Biblical Adam, the first man, who was entitled to give names to the newly created beings. Like Adam, he even cedes a part of his body to make the creation of his female companion possible. The new Eve, Adam's companion, who is thus emerging, who receives her name through the poet's creation act, is none other than Palestine[9]. The poem that echoes the Qur'anic creational imperative *Kun fa-yakūn*– "Be – and it is"[10]–is a Palestinian transcript of the Genesis story. The lyrical "I" of the poem is Adam, but at the same time, since he writes down the covenant, he figures as the writer of a new Scripture. This new poetic bestowal of identity on the Beloved, demanding the utmost extent of the poet's devotion, is deemed comparable, even superior to a real, i.e., a bloody sacrifice. It is *aghlā mina l-shuhadā'*. It has redemptive value, as the speaker is well aware when he ranks himself typologically among the bearers of the highest rank in love, the martyrs of love.

3 Exodus: The poet's alter ego: the fighter

Four years after the creation of ʿĀshiq, Darwish left his homeland to join the Arab intellectual elite in Beirut. Here for a second time he had to distance himself from the way his poetry was read, this time from the perusal of his poetry in ideological propaganda allegedly sanctioned by himself as an authoritative voice. It is true that he had during his stay with the Palestinian exiles in Beirut turned to extol the resistance fighter as a hero, a figure that since the beginning of military struggle in the mid-1960s had kindled new hope of recuperating the land. The *fidā'ī* in Darwish's poetry came to be regarded as a redeemer, as a tragic figure who through a highly symbolic act of self-sacrifice leads his people to freedom, without himself participating in it–a hero like the Biblical Moses who led the Israelites in their Exodus to re-settle in the promised land–himself dying before treading on its ground.

The struggle for the land which in the 1960s became manifest in military operations of the *fidā'iyīn*, thus took textual shape with Darwish's placing the fighter in the mythical context of his poetry. The poetical achievement of the creation of a being called "Palestine," i.e., the creation of a nucleus of a "Palestinian *Genesis* story," was thus followed by another act of inventing sacred history: elevating the fighter to the rank of a redeemer figure. It is hardly surprising that Darwish's poetry celebrating the *fidā'ī* was again taken as a "canonical expression" of the new collective experience: to be part of a decisive movement promising liberation, to live the miracle of an Exodus.

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[9] The poem is highly autobiographic since it opens a poetical dialogue in response to a famous earlier poem by the Iraqi poet Sayyab modifying particular poetological views of the earlier poet, see Neuwirth 1999.

[10] *Qur'an* 2:117, 3:47, 16:40, 19:35, 36:82, 40:68.

Reclaiming the land is not an exclusive matter of poetical words. The poetical tradition of Palestine was closely connected with the deeds of fighters and martyrs who had been celebrated in the 1930s as heroes par excellence. The figure of the *shahīd*, the martyr, was the yardstick for the achievement of keeping one's honor. "My land is my honor, either living in dignity or dying for the sake of it": *arḍī ʿirḍī* was the motto of the poets of the 1930s.[11] The power of the poet, however efficient, had to be measured by the power of the fighter. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Palestinian reaction to the situation expressed itself in acts of resistance. The self-dedication of the poet could not claim to be more than a kind of metaphor for the real self-dedication of the fighter. The poet remains alive; he is a martyr only virtually, or in other words: although being himself absent from the real fight, he participates in it through the *shahīd* who is his alter ego. The poet, in turn lends to the *shahīd* his poetical speech, inscribing his deeds into the consciousness of the Palestinian society. Darwish himself states:

> The fighters are the genuine founders of a writing that for a long, long time will have to search for a linguistic equivalent to their heroism and their amazing lives. How can the new writing crystallize and take form in a battle that has such a rhythm of rockets? And how can traditional verse define the poetry now fermenting in the belly of the volcano? (Darwish 1995: 62, Darwish 1986b: 79)

The fighter in Darwish's poetry is portrayed as a hero who through his self-sacrifice qualified as a sacred, superhuman figure, the true lover of the homeland,[12] indeed, her bridegroom, who through his violent death consumes a mythical marriage with her. One of the most overtly mythopoeic poems is *Aʾrās* (1977):

> From the war comes a lover to the wedding-day
> Wearing his first suit
> And enters
> The dance floor as a horse
> Of ardor and carnation
> And on the string of women's joyful trilling he meets Fatima
> And to them sing
> All the trees of places of exile
> And soft kerchiefs of mourning…
> And on the roof of women's joyful trilling come planes
> Planes, planes,
> Snatching the lover from the butterfly's embrace
> And the kerchiefs of mourning
> And the girls sing:
> You have married
> You have married all the girls
> O Muhammad!

11 See Embaló, Neuwirth & Pannewick 2000: Einleitung.

12 See e.g., "ʿĀʾid ilā Yāfā" (Returning to Yafa) from "Uḥibbuki aw lā uḥibbuki" (I love you or I don't love you), 1972. In: Darwish 1994: 401-405.

You have spent the first night
High on the roof-tiles of Haifa
O Muhammad!
O prince of lovers…[13]

The idea of the mythic wedding of the dying fighter would be unthinkable in isolation from the ghazal tradition. In mythic love poetry the lover has to experience, indeed to welcome, the death of his *ego* in order to attain the desired union with the Beloved. At the same time, in the Palestinian context, the concept of the martyr of love is embedded in a ritual reflecting the most important social rite in the rural milieu. The *shahīd* becomes a bridegroom (*ʿarīs*), who warrants through his marriage the perpetuation of his community.[14] Messianic faculties had been ascribed to the *shahīd* earlier, but the step remained an individual literary device. Darwish involves the martyr into a drama located in the framework of a *rite de passage* and turning loss into redemption. Unlike the traditional Islamic imagination of the martyr, the post-colonial vision is not concerned with a reward in the beyond, his deed being an end in itself. He sacrifices himself, dedicating himself to the Beloved as a *fidāʾī*. Since there is no military gain either, the achievement of the martyr is primarily symbolic. It is the revival of memory, the crossing of the boundaries of gratuitous dreaming and fantasizing toward heroic activism; it is part of an Exodus into the disputed Promised Land.

This new act of canon-generating was interiorized in a unique way by his meanwhile extended community of listeners and readers, who in a strikingly ritual fashion took possession of Darwish's art. Through a kind of translating Darwish's poetical speech into rite, the myth of the *fidāʾī*-redeemer severed itself from poetry and was concretized in daily life. The myth of the freedom fighter as a "dying god," as a figure dying a sacrificial death to redeem, or verbally, "to marry" the mythified Palestine was to be applied to every fighter who died in action. Burials become equal to wedding ceremonies. The ensuing condolence ceremony staged by women rather than the male members of the household betrayed a striking subversion of the customary social order: The patriarchal order–compromised in times of powerlessness–was temporally set completely out of validity. The *ʿurs al-shahīd,* the "marriage of the martyr," until our time has been a powerful rite of commemoration.

4 Leaving the symbolic stage: The Metamorphosis

It is worth noticing that Darwish in the 1990s reconsidered his "poetical youth" and identified his role of the *ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn* (Lover of Palestine) as a poetic

[13] "Aʾrās from Aʾrās" (Weddings), 1977. In: Darwish 1994; Translation (slightly modified) by Johnson Davies 1980.

[14] See the collection "Aʾrās." In: Darwish 1994: 591ff. Darwish's earliest poem on the shahīd-ʿarīs (from 1964) has been discussed by Neuwirth 2006.

role played during a phase when he had not yet attained his maturity, when he was in a kind of ecstasy or even rapture, that only through a decisive turn in his perception of life could give way to sobriety. In his diwan *Sarīr al-gharība* (The Bed of the Stranger) he confesses:

A Mask of Majnun Layla

I found a mask, and it pleased me
to be my other. I was not
thirty yet and I thought, the limits
of being are the words. I was
sick for Layla like any young man, in whose blood
salt had spread. When she was not
present physically her spiritual image
appeared in everything. She brings me close to
the circuit of the stars. She separates me from my life
on earth. She is not death nor
is she Layla. "I am you,
there is no escape from the blue naught for the last
embrace." The river cured me when I threw myself into it to commit suicide….[15]

Though he is aware that he cannot completely step out of the role of Qays, he feels estranged from it; indeed, his form of existence is estrangement, a consciousness, in which the poet in the conventional sense no longer exists. "The concluding verses of the poem are unique in expressing a total renunciation of the modern self-perception as a subject and in dismissing any essentialist and monolithic understanding of identity, conveying as against that a self-consciousness that does not aspire any more to poethood but only to poetry" (See Milich 2004: 132-136):

I am a being that has never been. I am an idea for a poem
That is without land nor body,
Without son nor father.
I am Qays Layla, I
I am nothing (Darwish 1999b: 122).

The achievement of the poetic creation of Palestine once attained is not necessarily threatened by the transformation of the poet, nor does the poet explicitly attempt to de-narrate its genesis. Yet, his "ex-centric" self-location is, of course, indicative of a new mental condition attained in wider circles within the Palestinian intelligentsia.

It proved more complicate to re-think the second act of invention of sacred history. Darwish had already in the eighties tried to distance himself from the figure of the martyr,[16] claiming the more modest role of their guardian in order to

15 "Sarīr al-gharība" (The Bed of the Stranger). In Darwish 1999b: 121.

16 See e.g. the poems "When the martyrs go to Sleep" and "On the slope, higher than the sea, they slept" from: *Ward aqall* (Fewer Roses) 1986. English translation in: Darwish 2003: 16, 22.

defend them against their relentless exploitation in political propaganda. Speaking to the already martyred heroes, assuming them sleeping, remote from reality, he had consoled them, praising their state of integrity, their aloofness from the realm of propaganda. His "addresses to the martyrs" had been, however, of little avail to the consciousness of the Palestinian public who, since Darwish's once achieved coupling not only of text and land, but also of fighter and poet, had cherished the figure of the martyr closely related to that of the poet as an anchor of hope since they continued to live under siege and to long for redemption.

The poetic creation of the martyr had established himself as a redeemer figure bearing strong mythic characteristics, whose "*hieros gamos*," his "sacred marriage," with the mythic earth of Palestine presupposes divine dimensions. Gods, once established through poetic words, do not die, but have—in order to disappear—to be killed by those whose words created them. About thirty years after the creation of the martyr, in 2002, Darwish turns the hierarchy of ranks upside down and exposes himself to the devastating critique of his poetical creature, the martyr. He allows the martyr to correct his perception of martyrdom and tell him that his entire martyr poetry was superfluous, was nothing but idle noise. The martyr thus steps out of the creation of the poet, rejecting any part in poetic imagination. To quote from Darwish's divan *Ḥālat Ḥiṣār*[17]*:*

> The martyr besieges me when I live a new day
> He asks me: Where have you been?
> Return the words you gave me as presents
> To the dictionaries,
> Relieve the sleepers from the buzzing echo.

Step by step, the figure of the martyr as a poetic creation is de-constructed. Thus, the inverted social order—where not men but women determine the social life staging a wedding instead of a funeral—needs to be revised:

> The martyr warns me: Do not believe their ululations
> Believe my father when he looks at my picture, crying
> Why did you change turn, my son, walking on ahead of me
> I was to be first.

Martyrdom is no longer a social rite with redemptive power, but an individual act motivated by personal pride and defiance of despair:

> To resist means: to be confident of the health
> Of the heart and of the testicles, to be confident of your incurable malady
> The malady of hope

Martyrdom is an absolutely private endeavor: it resembles the transition from real time and real space into imagined time and space familiar from the Islamic ritual prayer. That interpretation is suggested by the concluding verse of the sec-

[17] "Ḥālat Ḥiṣār" (Situation of siege) in Darwish 2002: 98 ff. English Translation of extracts by Elbendary 2002.

tion on the martyr which echoes the concluding phrase of Islamic ritual prayer, *al-salāmu ʿalaykum* (Peace be upon you). But whereas in prayer those words–uttered in the end and addressed to the real or imagined co-performers–mark the re-entrance of the praying person from imagined sacred time and space into reality, the martyr bids farewell for good: he addresses the "nothing" that has become of him: he bids farewell to his shadow.

> And in what remains of the dawn – I walk outside myself
> And in what remains of the night – I hear the echoes of footsteps within me
> Peace be upon him who shares my alertness at the ecstasy of the light,
> The light of butterflies
> In the darkness of this tunnel
> Peace be upon my shadow.

By presenting a wholesale de-construction of the poetical image of the martyr, Darwish ends his long personal history of a mythopoeic poet and thus concludes his role as a liminal figure though he does not cease to reflect collective, i.e., political, issues in his poetry. But he certainly converts or more precisely: he concludes his long impending conversion from a sort of "magician poet" submersing vicariously for his community in mythic time and space, to a more secular and socially independent role that comes close to that of the modern free-lance writer. Following his success in creating a *Genesis* story and an *Exodus* drama for his homeland Palestine, Darwish turned to write his non-territorial, poetic homeland. Similar to the Islamic mystic who considers the entire existence on earth to be an exile of the soul, and similar to the religious Jew who views the entire world to be in exile, the Palestinian Mahmud Darwish, very much like Paul Celan, the Poet of Exile *par excellence*, perceives the world as an exile-home, "a land made of words." "In the end we will ask"–he says in the poem *Fī l-masāʾ al-akhīr ʿalā hādhihi l-arḍ* (On the Last Evening on This Earth, 1992): "Was Andalusia/ here or there? On this earth … or in poetry?" The acceptance of this totally revised self-image as part of the poet's "meta-literary" autobiography by Palestinian society will, of course, not last be a matter of the political developments in the future.

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"*Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud…*"

Farzaneh Milani

"*Yeki bud, yeki nabud*." Persian stories always begin with this paradoxical phrase, which, like "bir varmış, bir yokmuş," simply means: there was one and there wasn't one.[1] Throughout my childhood, "yeki bud, yeki nabud" was my key to a world of wonder and mystery.[2] Like Abracadabra, it had incantatory powers: now you see it, now you don't. It is so and it is not so. Bedazzled, I would throw open the gates of my ears and eyes and witness the birth of an enchanted world. On the wings of words, I would journey to a space of boundless possibilities where everything sounded real but was beyond my everyday reality. "Yeki bud, yeki nabud" was a reminder that every story is the ghost of the life that inspired it. It celebrated the birth of one while mourning the death of the other. It was the moment that eluded classification, when opposites lived in perfect harmony. Like dreams, like the unconscious, like nature in its infinite glory, it was a tangle of competing viewpoints. It was the reconciliation of the irreconcilable.

"Yeki bud, yeki nabud" was also a warning at the threshold of all stories. In its succinct and economical language, it questioned any notion of a singular truth, of a unified identity. It knew all too well that the mind creates its own elaborate, self-serving fictions, contaminating the story with shaky evidence. Refusing to choose one side or the other, it welcomed paradoxes and the elusive mutability of truth. It accepted the perpetual metamorphosis of life into death, of facts into fiction, of present into past and future. It was the conjunction but also the disjunction of life and its telling.

Before I knew it, however, childhood and its tantalizing tales came to an end. Chasing new dreams and different stories, I left my country and by leaving Iran, I became an Iranian. Uprooted and transplanted, I felt disoriented like a cat without whiskers. I looked every which way for a sense of familiarity and belonging. Immersed in discontinuities, I needed something solid to hold on to. Gradually, I adopted Iranian literature as my surrogate home, my portable homeland. It was a safe place to return to and from which to embark. I put down roots in it and found myself drawn, more than ever before, to the poetry of the contemporary poet, Forugh Farrokhzad. Against the advice of many, I decided to

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1 A shorter, slightly different version of this paper appeared in *The Southern Review*, summer 2002, V. 38, N. 3: 620-624.

2 "Yeki bud, yeki nabud" was often followed by "*gheyr as khoda hich kas nabud*," which means, "there was no one, but God." Although the appearing/disappearing act takes on a new meaning with this closure, the paradox remains the same. It refers to that mystical moment when God–or a literary equivalent–begins the act of creation. By seeing life in death and death in life, the storyteller can tell the story as if the dead were living.

write my dissertation on her life rather than on the life and fiction of the French novelist, Gustave Flaubert.

No full-length biography of Farrokhzad or, for that matter, of any Iranian woman, existed at the time. As for autobiographies, I could barely find any. A highly controversial singer/dancer, Banu Mahvash, and a well-known political activist, Malakeh E'tezadi, were the only women who had published their "life stories." In a sex-segregated society, women and their images are concealed behind tall walls, mandatory veils, and codes of silence. In a culture that idealizes women's public anonymity, publishing life narratives is the ultimate act of unveiling.[3]

Farrokhzad, however, was an exception. She constructed her artistic universe around the individual and the individualizing perspective, becoming a figure of intense controversy in the process. Invented and re-invented with an amazing abandon, she elicited scandalized attention and voyeuristic fascination. While living a rich and iconoclastic life with plenty of events to whet the appetite of any biographer, she produced poetry more autobiographical than had ever been attempted in Iran.

Criticized for her outrageous exhibitionism and accused of self-absorption, Farrokhzad became fair game in shameless snatch-and-publish operations. She suffered the transformation of her chosen privacy into a public spectacle. Tabloids masquerading as literary journals and investigative reporters turned literary critics made no distinction between life and art, fact and fiction, biographical data and tattletale.

With her reputation tarnished, her pioneering contribution to Iranian literature trivialized, Farrokhzad reacted bitterly to the sensation-seeking interest in her personal life, an interest that all too often replaced the more serious attention that her work deserved. Showing a pronounced aversion to giving even the scantiest biographical data on herself, she dismissed all personal questions. Shortly before her untimely death in 1967, when she was asked to talk about her life in a radio interview, she dismissed the question. "Good heavens!" she protested. "Discussing this seems to me a rather boring and useless task."

To my chagrin, finding biographical data on this most autobiographical poet was not easy. Farrokhzad was not granted any academic recognition in her lifetime. She was never appointed as a poet in residence or a distinguished visiting professor in any institution; she was never awarded honorary doctorates; she was never asked to deliver a series of lectures, temptingly titled "Farrokhzad on Farrokhzad," in which she would delineate the magical transformation of a living

[3] Paradoxically, in the last few years, autobiographies and memoirs have become the preferred genre among Iranian women living in diaspora. See Dumas 2003, Hakkakian 2004, Goldin 2003, Nafisi 2003, Ramazani 2002, Satrapi 2003, Satrapi 2004, Satrapi 2005, and Moaveni 2005, among many others.

woman into beautifully crafted and composed words. No university, library, or research center housed her papers, letters, unpublished poems, or manuscripts.

Farrokhzad herself was not a self-documenting person. She did not keep a journal. Although she was a prolific correspondent, her letters were hitherto unpublished. I did not have at my disposal tapes of her therapy sessions or stacks of letters safely tucked away in some attic. By comparison to those lucky biographers who have records, manuscripts, and intimate source materials available to them, I found myself developing an acute case of access-envy and archive blues.

My plan of amassing information through interviews was also thwarted at every turn. Various men who claimed to have been Farrokhzad's lovers were all too eager to share their experiences. But those closest to the poet either refused to be interviewed or were unavailable. In fact, some of the most influential people in her life have granted no interviews then or now. Finally, when I met Ebrahim Golestan, a prominent novelist/filmmaker and Farrokhzad's lover for the last eight years of her life, he was quick to ask me why instead of Farrokhzad's biography I did not consider writing a cookbook in English. "Persian cuisine is exquisitely delicious," he told me with great conviction, "imagine what a contribution such a book will be."

Frustrated with the result of my interviews, trained to collect factual documents and surviving evidence, incapable of living with the anxiety of ambiguity that my research had generated, I settled for the easy way out. I did not want a keyhole view of Farrokhzad's life nor was I interested in turning into, what Janet Malcolm calls, a "professional burglar, breaking into a house, rifling through certain drawers" (Malcolm 1993: 86), and triumphantly bearing my loot away. If Farrokhzad was so reticent about sharing biographical information, I argued conveniently in the introduction to my dissertation (Milani 1979: 13), who gave me the right to invade her privacy? I promised to put my biographical passion on hold until the day I knew the "facts" of her life.

Switching from poet to poetry, from biography to autobiography disguised as literary criticism, I opted for an analysis of Farrokhzad's work. With passion and urgency, I portrayed her as an exile in her own country, a woman who refused silence and exclusion by exploring new territories, re-scripting the plot of her life, recreating her own language, and reconstructing her style with little help from tradition. I saw in her art my own skirmishes as an immigrant and characterized it as a struggle against cultural conventions. I argued that it demonstrates a dizzying, dazzling mobility, a refusal to be confined within familiar boundaries, certainties, and norms while portraying simultaneously a sense of homelessness, of exile. Farrokhzad's poetry, I concluded, personifies the pleasures of hybridization, of mingling the old and the new, but also its many pains and problems.

While I wrestled with my biographical conundrums, the dramatic fate of a movie by the Syrian-American director, Moustaffa Akkad, attracted my attention. A multi-million dollar project, *Mohammad, the Messenger of God*, was the first

cinematic biography of the Prophet. Beginning in the year 610 when Prophet Mohammad received his first revelation, it followed his rise as the spiritual and political founder of Islam. The director, a Muslim, had taken extra precautions not to offend Muslim sensibilities. He had submitted his script to Islamic scholars to be checked for historical accuracy and orthodoxy. More importantly, he had made sure not to impersonate Prophet Mohammed. The title character never appears in *Mohammad, the Messenger of God*. He is never seen or heard.[4] No actor plays his role. We see people address him, but never see him talk. We see the head of his camel, but not him riding the camel. We see his sword, but not his hand holding the sword.

Despite these preventive measures, the premiere of the film in March 1977 was halted by a small band of American Muslims who took 132 hostages in three Washington buildings for 38 hours.[5] One reporter was shot dead; four people were wounded. The gunmen found the film sacrilegious and demanded its immediate banning. The film was pulled on its opening day. To forestall further protest, the prophet's name was removed from the title, which became simply *The Message*. Still, the opposition was not appeased. There were demonstrations and bomb threats. A riot broke out in Pakistan. All Islamic countries, except Libya, banned the film.

The Grand Sheik, Abdel Halim Mahmoud of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, captured in a nutshell the major objection to the film. "The Koran is revelation," he announced, "and the life of the Prophet is a divine commentary on that revelation. The idea of them being portrayed by others is particularly offensive" (quoted in Schickel 1977: 17). Which others, I wondered, make the portrayal of the Prophet so particularly "offensive"? Who is and who is not allowed to offer commentaries on divine commentaries? What else lies at the core of this heretical violation of propriety? After all, the massive body of reports, called *Hadith* in Arabic, presents a more comprehensive biography of the Prophet Mohammad than any other man of his time or any prophet who preceded him. Second in authority only to the Qur'an, these biographical reports form an important part of Islamic canonical law. For fourteen centuries, the study of Mohammad's life has been and continues to be a crucial part of a Muslim scholar's education.

In *The Seductions of Biography,* Barbara Johnson writes, "There are always at least two people competing for control over the story of a life. Sometimes they are the biographer and the subject, sometimes the biographer and the Guardians of the subject's estate" (Rhiel and Suchoff [eds.] 1966: 119). In the Islamic world,

4 "Akkad has solved part of the problem by having a tiny light bulb on the Panavision camera just above the lens. In all scenes where characters and crowds act or react to the Prophet, the 6-watt bulb is Mohammed's immanence." See Popular Epic: 24.

5 For a detailed description of these events, see *The New York Times*, Thursday, 10 March 1977; and *Time*, 21 March 1977, Vol. 109, no 12.

the clerics, the official scholars, have had total control over the biography of the Prophet Mohammad and, by extension, all life narratives. As guardians of his "authentic" biography and its "approved" commentary, they have disallowed anyone to appropriate their role. The film director and the camera, the storyteller, the painter, and the religiously untrained biographer are not permitted to intrude into the telling of lives. That would make them surrogate priests.

Identifying with Akkad's difficulties, deeply troubled by the violent reactions to his film, and aware of my own failure in writing Farrokhzad's biography, I became convinced that life narratives are misfits in the Islamic world.[6] A barrier as solid and forbidding as a veil seemed to cover private selves and forbid self-revelation and self-referentiality. This cultural context, I thought, insists upon a sharp separation between the inner and the outer, the private and the public. It is not conducive to the development of personal narratives and their generic uncovering of the self.

I found myself more and more fascinated by the openness and transparency of American culture. The first entry in my diary upon arrival was the observation that "there are no walls around the houses here." I came from Iran where walls and veils abounded. I came from a land where even paradise was imagined as a garden surrounded by celestial walls. Having been used to enclosures, equating openness with vulnerability and danger, I wondered how Americans felt protected in open spaces. Soon, I took this absence of walls as a metaphor for the up-front nature of verbal and nonverbal codes of communication in America. I was delighted to see self-narration as an acknowledged right of all Americans (in fact, their favorite pastime). I had never seen so many people eagerly recount their lives in books, magazines, on radio and television, in films, and in therapy sessions. Month after month, year after year, autobiographies were on the best-seller lists. People made autobiographical statements on their license plates. They marketed their confessions for mass consumption. They competed for airtime to sensationalize their private lives on talk shows.

Viewing Iran as an essentially self-effacing culture, I chose veiling–this portable wall–as the new topic for my research. For well over a decade, I studied the cultural significance and corollary of the veil. Finally, I concluded that in a

6 I was not the only person presenting life narratives as cultural and literary misfits in the Middle East. In *Middle Eastern Lives*, the first book devoted to the topic, Marvin Zonis contended, "autobiography and biography are not yet part of the genres of literature in the Middle East" (See Kramer 1991: 61). Others compared the New Testament and the Qur'an regarding each religion's views on life narratives. In his biography of Prime Minister Hoveida, Abbas Milani stated, "The gospels, as the fount of Christianity, are essentially composed of four, sometimes conflicting, biographical narratives… In the Koran, on the other hand, the world and the word are created to show the glory of God. The prophet Mohammed, about whose life very little is offered and no ambiguity is tolerated, enters the narrative only to carry out the commands of his lord" See Milani 2000: XI.

veiled society, women are not the only ones veiled. The concrete, the specific, and the personal are also veiled. Communication is veiled. In a veiled society, I maintained, walls surround houses, dissimulation conceals heretic tendencies; houses become compartmentalized into inner and outer areas; abstractions supplant concreteness; art becomes impersonal; life narratives are rare. In such a society, there is no tradition of confession in either its Catholic sense or that practice's secular modern counterpart, psychotherapy.

It took me years to realize that in America, other kinds of walls existed. Many times, with eyes wide open, I stumbled over those walls, mile by glorious mile of invisible walls. Heaven knows how often, like an untrained dog, I ploughed right through the invisible fence and found myself trespassing on someone else's privacy. I asked indiscreet questions. I volunteered the wrong answers. I looked too closely when I should have averted my eyes. I listened with rapt attention when I should have pretended not to hear.

I did not realize invisible walls abounded in America. It took me several years and many embarrassing moments to understand how privacy could be protected without perceptible walls. The idea of invisible fences was alien to me. Eventually, I had to admit that this compulsively self-narrating culture has its own codes of silence, its own veils, its own walls. Open about certain issues, even its over-the-top kind of confessors consider certain topics off limits.

My acclimatization to American society taught me that life, like Truth, is covered with numerous veils. Finally, I had to acknowledge to myself that we reveal or conceal the truth of ourselves in the poems we craft, in the stories we spin, in the life narratives we produce. Perhaps biographies and autobiographies are not only means of self-expression but also invisible walls we erect to protect the unsaid and the irrepressible. Perhaps there is always another curtain to part, another layer to discard, another veil to rend. And there is always the desire to unveil, to uncover, to find creative channels for self-expression. I now believe that biographies and autobiographies in their modern, Western sense are like houses without walls around them. They simply claim to conjoin the private and the public, the inner and the outer. Iranians may not have written many life narratives of this kind, but, surely, they have interwoven the fabric of their lives in their art. I simply had to discard my narrow definition of biography and autobiography and look differently in different places.

I came to a humbling revelation that I simply cannot seize control of Farrokhzad's life; that, in fact, the self refuses to be fully narrated, to become a text, to be reduced to a language construct. Like the morning breeze on a beautiful spring day, a lived life is un-trappable. Like the sun in high noon, it is majestic, but cannot be looked at with naked eyes. Life, like truth, is covered with numerous veils. The more I unveil, the more there is to unveil.

Equipped with this liberating knowledge and twenty-five years of continued fascination with Farrokhzad's poetry, I have returned to my aborted project. Al-

though I can't claim to know Farrokhzad more intimately, I am ready to write my version of her life. This time, relying on the wisdom of millions of storytellers over thousands of years, I will begin my tale of Forugh Farrokhzad, with "yeki bud, yeki nabud."

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Index

1956 – ein Pilzjahr 53
"Die arabische Autobiographie" 191
ʿAravīm rōḳedīm (Dancing Arabs) 191
ʿAraveskoṭ (Arabesk) 192
À la recherche du temps perdu 176, 183
Aʾrās 211, 212, 216
Abdel Halim Mahmoud 222
Abdülaziz 104, 126
Abülhamid 12, 104-105, 126, 133
Abkhazian (ABAZA) 138
Abdülhak Hâmit Tarhan see Tarhan, Abülhak Hâmit 146
adab 39
Adak, Hülya 120, 122, 125-141
Adam, Biblical see also Adam, First Man 203, 210
Adil 195
Adıvar, Halide Edip 116, 125, 138, 140, 147, 152, 154,
adolescence; adolescent autobiographical writing 29, 51, 58, 129
Adorno, Theodor W. 182
Aegean region 167
Ağaoğlu, Adalet 169
agency 65, 66, 75, 76, 126, 138
aging 228, 11, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63
Ağır Roman (A Serious Novel) 166
Ahmed Raşid 88
Ahmet Gazi lodge 95
Ahmet Celâl 153
Ahmet Cemil 152, 153
Ahmet İhsan see Tokgöz, Ahmet İhsan 144-145
Ahmet Midhat 12, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 125, 144, 145, 151, 152, 227
Akkad, Moustaffa 221, 222-223
Akyıldız, Olcay 10, 17-31, 198, 227
Al-Azhar University 222
Alay Köşkü 147
Albania 127
Alexandria 128
Algiers 35, 90
Ali Fuat 125, 126, 131; see also Cebesoy, Ali Fuat
alienation effect 198
Allied Forces 153
alter ego 153, 178, 191, 205, 210, 211
America 118, 177, 207, 223, 224, 225, 229
America-Holy Land Project 207
American Muslims 222
American Palestine 207, 217
American Protestants 207
American society 14, 224
Amman 204, 230, 293
Amorbach 173, 176, 177, 178
Anṭūn (Anton) Shammas 192, 202
Anafartalar 148, 156
Anamın Kitabı (My Mother's Book) 110
Anar, İhsan Oktay 166
Anatolia; Anatolian people 23, 28, 29, 91, 107, 111, 114, 116-121, 128, 149, 150, 152-153
Anatolian Movement also see Turkish National Struggle 116, 118-119
anecdote 11, 18, 38, 39, 144, 148, 149, 165
anı-roman 167, 169, 166
Ankara 19, 96, 97, 105, 120, 123, 128, 140, 148, 149, 152-156
antagonistic account 126
anthology 144
anti-hero 192-193
apologetic text 68
Arab culture 40
Arab public 204
Arab World 194, 205
Arab(ic) autobiography (Modern Arabic autobiography) 10-11, 14, 35, 37-41, 48, 83
Arabic literature; Arabic literary language 35, 37-38, 41, 48, 94, 98, 192, 196, 200-201, 227, 230
Arab-Muslim societies 40
Arabness 193
archaische Rudimente/archaic rudiments 175
argumentative strategy 76
ʿĀshiq min Filasṭīn (Lover from Palestine) 204
Asiatics 37
Aşiyan 145
Asmali Mescit 74, 153
Assembly see Grand National Assembly 128, 132-133, 136, 147-149
Ästhetische Theorie 173, 175, 182
At Seventy 56, 63

Ataç, Nurullah 9, 15,
Atatürk Kavgası 127, 141
Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal (see also Mustafa Kemal) 12, 13, 24, 107, 121, 127, 139, 148, 149
Atay, Oğuz 154
Atılgan, Yusuf 154
audience 12, 23, 30, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 132, 144, 203
authenticity 10, 11, 43, 83, 103, 157, 158
authority 13, 44, 56, 70, 121, 132, 133, 136, 157, 159, 160, 161, 195, *222*
authorship 44, 65, 71, 77, 157, 159, 160, 161
autobiographer 37, 57, 86, 97, 126, 130, 131, 138, 185, 186
autobiographic "I" 61
autobiographical: account 83, 84, 86, 196; act 86, 91, 96; anxiety 38; claim 13, 159; culture 83; dialogue 75 ; dimension 52, 144, 145, 153, 154 ; discourse 11, 159 ; documents 67 ; element 157, 166 ; fiction 10, 159, 186 ; genre 11, 36, 125 ; interiority 84; memory 13, 143, 146; mentality 85; narrative 11-12, *27*, 29, 73, 108, 109, 114, 117, 119, 120-121, 186; novel 10, 17, 19, 43, 125, 153, 160, 166, 185, 186; passage 89; perspective 68; project 57, 61, 62; register 83, 85, 86; relationality 108; sketches 85; space 14, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183; subject 40, 48, 109, 116; texts 9, 11, 28, 39, 57, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 75, 76, 96, 165, 166; theme 12, 14; topic 67; tradition 12; truth 12, 48; turn 84, 86; work 51, 84, 102, 130; writer 55, 68, 70-71, 75, 169; writing 9-14, 23, 38, 43, 51-54, 57, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70-77, 78, 99, 107-109, 116-117, 119, 120-122, 125, 126, 143, 145, 152, 160, 162, 165, 200, 201, *229*
Autobiographical Discourses 102
Autobiographical Pact, The 43, 47, 49
autobiography and aging 11, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61
Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, The 52
autobiography studies 12, 85
autonomous: being 74; individual 65
autopathography 54, 55
Aylak Adam 153
Azrael 160
Bâbıâli 145, 147, 148, 155, 156
backwardness 193
Baghdad 23, 87, 103, 186, 187, 189, 190, 201, 202
Balıkpazarı 145
Balkan War 115, 116
Balkans 102
Beauvoir, Simon de 57, 58-60, 61
Beckett, Samuel 45, 61
Beirut 155, 204-205, 210, 215, 216, 217, *227*, 228, 230
Bell Jar, The 51
beloved, the 208-210, *212*
Ben-Arieh, Yehoshua 207
Benim Adım Kırmızı (My Name is Red) 169, 174, 181, 183
Benjamin, Walter 46
Benveniste, Emile 45
Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills 157
Berk, İlhan 167-168, 169
Beyazıt 145
Beyoğlu/Pera 145
Biblical text 207
Bibliothèque Nationale 128, 140
Bildung 51, 57
bilingualism; bilingual narrative 14, 185, 186, 198, 200, 202
biography 14, 37, 38, 41, 52, 53, 57-58, 86, 97, 125, 130 ,131, 154 168, 220, 221-224, 225; biographical effect 53; biographical pact 11, 44, 52, 131
Bir Bilim Adamının Romanı 154
Bir Tereddüdün Romanı 153
Black Stone 195
Blue Anatolian humanism (*Mavi Anadolu hümanizmi*)150
Boğaziçi University 7, 9, 10, 18, 20, *227*, 229, 230
Bohemia 68
bölmeli kafalar 153
Bourdieu, Pierre 84
bourgeois culture 36, 59, 68
Brecht, Bertold 188
Britain 118
British colonial rule 119
British Museum 128, 140
Bünyan 157
Burckhardt, Jacob 37, 65, 77
Bursa 28, 88, 92, 95, 99
Büyük Mecmua 147

cafés 145, 148
Cağaloğlu 145, 146
canonical text 73, 84
Catcher in the Rye, The 51
Catholic 68-69, 224
Cebesoy, Ali Fuat 126, 140
Celan, Paul 215
Celveti 88
censorship 13, 127, 131
Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları (Cevdet Bey and His Sons) 174, 183
charisma 120, 145
childhood 14, 44, 51, 67, 72, 102, 103, 109, 110, 112 113, 122, 129, 131, 143, 145, 157, 158, 159, 165, 165, 168, 169, 173-182, 187, 190, 196, 206, 219
Christian autobiography 35
Christie, Ruth 157, 162, 163
chronicle 72, 85, 88, 94, 139
Çiçek Pasajı 145
Civilization 45, 48, 150, 153
class difference 113
classical Islamic autobiography 10
classical Ottoman poetry (*divan edebiyatı*) 147
classificatory function 46
clerk (*kâtib*) 144
closure of the self 61
coherent life-story 41
collection of biographical essays (*edebiyat anıları*) 13, 143, 154
collective trauma 137
colonized 194
colonizer 194
columnist 191
commentary 130, 166, 222, 223
Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) see also İttihat ve Teraki 127
common cultural practice 84
communality 13, 159
communicative actor 74, 75
communicative memory 13
community 10, 13, 67, 68, 88, 107, 121, 140, 143, 145, 146
compatriot 153, 193
"Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" 104, 105, 123
confessional mood 38
confessions 10, 11, 35, 36, 39, 43, 44, 52, 84, 129, 139, 161, 223
Confessions (Rousseau) 101-103, 141, 107-108
constructed other 17, 59
contingency 61
convent 72
conventional autobiographical studies 10
conventions of writing 73, 75
cosmopolitanism 116-117
Council of Basel 71
Couser, Thomas G. 54-55, 62
Cox, Debbie 186, 200
Creation of identity 46
Cüce (The Dwarf) 166, 169
cultural frame 47
Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi 128; see also Republican People's Party
CUO 127; see also Committee of Union and Progress
curriculum vitae (CV) 35, 48, 101
Cusa, Nicolaus de see Cusanus, Nicolaus 66
Cusanus, Nicolaus 12, 65, 66-71, 77

Daif, Shauqi 38
Dardanelles 153
Darwish, Mahmud 14, 203-205, 207, 208, 210-215, 216
Das Leben ist eine Karawanserai 10, 17-31
Davis, Moshe 207
De Man, Paul 46, 48, 51, 61, 62
Dear Shameless Death 21, 157, 159-160, 162
Death, discourse of 61
deconstruction 40
defeatism 118
deification 129, 133, 135, 139
demonic polyphony 45
Derrida, Jacques 11, 40, 41, 51, 61, 62
destigmatization 55
Deuxième Sexe, la 57, 59
Dhākira li-l-nisyān (A Memory of Forgetfulness) 205, 216
diary 12, 57, 88, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 153, 223, 203
didactic intention 70
Dilipak, Abdurrahman 139
Dilthey, Wilhelm 43, 48
disciplination 45
Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison 45
discourse 11, 17, 40, 46, 47, 48, 51, 56, 58, 59, 75, 108, 120, 144, 228
discursive: concept 54; dichotomy 60; effect 40; nexus 60
dislocation 162

divan 90, 157, 158, 204, 205, 214
divinatory manual 88, 89, 90, 91
divine: creator (*ulu yaratıcı*) 133; meanings 207; revelation 207
Diyorlar Ki 148, 156
domestic sphere 139
dream 27, 39, 157, 176, 212, 219
Dresden 69, 233
dualism 36, 196
Dufft, Catharina 7, 14, 30, 173-183, 227

E'tezadi, Malakeh 220
Eakin, Paul 85, 96, 108, 109, 123
early modern England 84
early modern Europe 84, 86, 97, 177
early modern period 12, 85, 87
East 9, 14, 168
Eastern People 146
edebiyat anıları 13, 143
edebiyat hâtıraları 119, 123
Edebiyat-ı Cedide 145, 152
Ediboğlu, Baki Süha 146,154
editor 25, 67, 144, 147, 228, 230
efficiency 45
egodocuments 67, 83; see also Selbstzeugnisse
Egypt 110, 111, 112, 113, 127, 193, 194, 196
Eickelman, Dale E. 39, 40, 41
elite 68, 70, 148, 191, 210
Elmalı 91, 94
emigration 209
emotional experience 72
empiricism 72
encyclopedic autobiography 136
Enderwitz, Susanne 10-11, 35-41, 196, 197, 227
England 43, 190
Enlightenment 45, 46, 108
epic 118, 134, 140, 222
Erbil, Leylâ 166, 169
Esen, Nüket 7, 12, 20, 101-105, 227
espace autobiograpique 173 ; see also autobiographical space
Esrar-ı Cinayat 101, 105
Essais 84
essentialism 37
ethnic identity 152
Etre et le Néant, l' 59, 60
Eugenius IV, Pope 66, 71,
Eurocentric essentialism 37
Europe 9, 10, 13, 43, 45, 96, 114, 199
European: autobiography 36; humanities 10; media 119; nations 119; public 119
Europeanists 84, 86
Europeanization 47
Eve (Adam's companion) 210
everyday experience 40
exclusion 36, 45, 73, 221
exile 13, 14, 93, 101-104, 119, 125-128, 149, 151, 176, 177,189, 199, 205, 206, 209, 211, 215, 221
existentialist: inquiry 57; philosophy 58; point of view 61
exodus 206, 210, 212, 215
extended family 143
extra-textual reference 43, 44, 47
Eyuboğlu, Sabahattin 150, 153
Ezli, Özkan 7, 11, 20, 43-49

Fähndrich, Hartmut 39
fairy 18, 134
fairytales 15, 18, 113, 134
fakhr 208
Fālnāme-i Caʿfer-i Ṣādıḳ 90
family 19, 25, 28 , 36, 37, 47, 58, 66, 67, 70, 72, 88, 90, 107, 109-113, 121, 122, 126, 127, 136, 138, 143, 151, 160, 165, 167, 168, 169, 176-181, 187, 189, 190,193, 194; family history 13, 72; family household 75; family-story 19, 143
fantasy 158, 175, 188, 199
Farrokhzad, Forugh 14-15, 129, 220-225, 229
Fatih 150
Fatma Aliye Hanım yahut bir Muharrire-i Osmaniyenin Neşeti 125, 141
Fecr-i Ati 114-115
Felâtun Bey ile Râkım Efendi 151, 154
feminism 9, 108
Fenni Hıtan (Circumcision Operations) 127
Fī l-masāʾ al-akhīr ʿalā hādhihi l-arḍ (On the Last Evening on this Earth) 215
fiction; fictitious 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17-31, 43, 44, 103, 152, 157, 158, 159, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 200, 219, 220
fidāʾī (devoted fighter) 205, 210, 212
fidāʾiyīn 210
figuration 46
Fikret Adil 153
Fikretperestlik 145
First Constitutional Monarchy 105

first person; first person narrator; first person literature; first person narrative 28, 35, 45, 52, 53, 67, 85, 91, 93, 97, 103, 153, 158, 191, 203
fixation 167
fixed indentity 45
Flaubert, Gustave 220
Force de Choses, la 58
foreign domination 119
foreign language 14
Foucault, Michel 11, 43-49, 198
fragmentation; fragmentation of selfhood 52, 53, 61, 62, 162
France 36, 43, 68, 85, 127, 128, 174
Frankfurt am Main 48, 49, 174, 182, 228
Freiburg 154, 227, 228, 230
French devotional writing 84
Frengi ve Belsoğukluğuna Yakalanmamak (Preventive Measures against Syphilis and Gonorhoea) 127
Friedman, Susan S. 108
Fuyuzi Çelebi 88

Gardenbar 145
Gaza 194
Gazi 133, 134, 152
Gazzali, al- 35
Gece Dersleri see Night Classes
generic hybrid 9
Genette, Gerard 45
Geneva 180
Genesis, Book of 208
Genius 120, 133, 149
genre; genre of autobiography; genre of poetry 9, 11, 12, 14, 36, 37, 39, 40, 48, 52, 53, 54, 57, 58, 65, 66, 67, 71, 72, 73, 83, 84, 86, 95, 125, 131, 137, 143, 144, 148, 151, 220, 223
geography 18, 47, 83, 168
German-speaking lands 68
Germany (early modern) 11, 17, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 43, 77, 174, 198, 199, 227, 228
gerontological theorization 57
Ghamdi, Saleh al-38
ghazal 151, 208, 212, 216
Gide, Andre 9
Giritli Ahmet Cevat 135
Glassen, Erika 13, 143-156, 228
Göç Temizliği (Migration Clean Up) 166, 169
God 28, 36, 40, 43, 66, 94, 103, 133, 160, 194, 207, 212, 214, 219, 223
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 43
Goitein, S. D. 37
Golestan, Ebrahim 221
gossip 151, 158
Grand Rue de Pera (İstiklal Caddesi) 145
Gray Panther 54
Great National Assembly see Grand National Assembly 128, 148, 149
Greek 37, 43, 121, 128, 150
Greiser, Daniel 69, 70
Grunebaum, Gustav von 9, 35
Gülfidan 161, 162
Gülhane Park 147
Gümüşsuyu 146
Günyol, Vedat 153
Gusdorf, Georges 9, 43, 84, 104, 108
Guth, Stephan 14, 185-202, 228
Güzel Sanatlar Birliği (Association of Fine Arts)147
gypsy 157

Ha-ʿīr 191
Habibi, Emil 192, 207
Habsburg lands 68
Hadith 222
Hafız 151
Hagiography; hagiographical work 37, 95
Haifa 204, 212
Hajj 195
Hakan, Ahmet 181
Hakimiyet-i Milliye 133
Ḥālat Ḥiṣār (Situation of Siege) 214
Halik-i Azim 133
Halpern-Guedj, Betty 60
Halveti 88, 91, 93
Handan 125
Handy, Robert 207
Hasan (an Ottoman soldier) 90-91
Hatıralar (Ebubekir Hâzım Tepeyran) 125
Hatıralar (Midhat Paşa)
Havighurst 57
Hawkins, Anne Hunsker 54-55
Hayat ve Hatıratım 13, 128-139
Hayatım 126
Hebrew 186, 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 195, 204
Hebrew Bible 207

Hebrew (modern language) 139, 191
Hebrew literature 191, 192
Hebrew University 191, 207
Hegel, G. W. F. 175
hermeneutical understanding 48
hero; heroism 11, 19, 51, 103, 117, 118, 120, 131, 143, 152, 153, 154, 191, 193, 208, 210, 211, 212, 214
Heselhaus, Herrad 11, 51-64, 228
Heybeli Ada 146
Hijaz 195
hikaye 89
Hildesheimer, Wolfgang 53
historical: analysis 59; discourse 47; universe 43
history book 9, 129, 135, 139
Holy Roman Empire 68
homeland 23, 117, 149, 152, 203, 204, 206, 208-211, 215, 219
homelessness 197, 221
hoşsohbetler 146
Hourani, Albert 37
House of Osman 93
human nature 129
human soul 138
humanity 119, 138
Humphreys, Stephen 37
Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası 127
Hüseyin Rahmi (Gürpınar) 146, 153, 156
Huzur 151, 153, 155

Ibn 'Arabi, Muhyiddin 94
İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal (İnal) 145
İçimizdeki Şeytan 153
idealism 118, 138, 194
identity 11-13, 27, 28, 40, 43-47, 52, 55, 56, 59, 61, 62, 85, 89, 97, 108, 109, 112-114, 116, 119-123, 143, 146, 150, 152-154, 168, 186, 188, 193, 197, 199, 206, 210, 213, 219, 229
identity construct 55
identity of author and text 46
identity politics 55, 56, 59
ideology of salvation 194
İkdam 116
illusion 96, 111, 190
İmkansız Aşk (Impossible Love) 166, 169
immanence 59, 222
imperialists 119
impersonal narrative voice 13, 159
impossibility of autobiography 83
imprisonment 127, 149, 205
İnan, Jale 154
İnan, Mustafa 154
Independence Struggle, see also Turkish National Struggle 13, 126, 127, 132, 137, 138
Independence Tribunals 13, 125, 134
Indians 137
indigenous 158
individual autonomy 37
individualism 36, 37, 38, 40, 85, 108, 116, 117, 122
individualist self 84
individualistic subject 108
individuality 38, 39, 40, 47, 65, 161
individuation process 107, 108, 109
inferiority complex 193
initiation rite 145
inkılap 135, 137, 150
inner life 39, 144
inner self 38, 41, 74, 180
İnönü, İsmet, 129, 138
inside view 158
institutional discourse 40
intended audience 70
intentionality 46
interdependence 126, 138
Interpreting the Self 11, 38
intertextual material 143
İntibah veya Sergüzeşt-i Ali Bey 151
introspection 9, 35, 45, 146, 153
Iran 187, 219, 220, 223
Iranian literature 219, 220
Iraqi Jew 187, 189, 192
irrepressible, the 224
Irzık, Sibel 13, 21, 157-164, 229
Islam 35-41, 138, 193, 193, 194, 195, 222, 230
Islamic Near East 83, 86
Islamic society 41
Islamic Studies 10, 35, 228, 230
Islamic Turkish tradition 150
İsmail Hakkı Bursevi 88, 89
İsmail Pasha 111
İsmet Pasha; see İsmet İnönü
Israel 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 195, 204, 208; God's New Israel 207; Israeli army 189, 191, 205; Israeli Jewish society 192, 195; Israeli Palestinian readers 192; Israeli prehistory 207; Israeli public opinion 192;

Israeli society 190, 191; see also Israel, Judaism
İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi 154
İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir 125, 168
İstiklal Harbimizin Esasları 126, 131, 136
Italy 37, 68
İtirafat 101
İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti / Partisi see CUP 127, 129
Izmir 110, 119, 121, 136

Jadeed, al- 204, 207
Jancke, Gabriele 11, 65-80, 200, 229
Janissary corps 90
Jerusalem 190, 191, 195
Jewish; Jewish society; Jewish state 68, 187-195, 207, 229; see also Israel; Judaism
jinn 157, 160
Johann of Soest 69
Johnson, Barbara 52, 222
Jordan, see Kingdom of Jordan 195, 208
Jordan, the river 195
Josel of Rosheim 68
journal 52, 57, 128, 135, 187, 204, 220, 221
Judaism 191, 194; see also Jewish, Israel
Julius Caesar 133
juridical literature 86
justice 119, 196, 166

Kaçan, Metin 166
Kadızadeli 94
Kadro 150
Kanafani, Ghassan 204
Kant, Immanuel 175
Kar (Snow) 174
Kara Kitap (The Black Book) 174
Kara, Halim 12, 20, 25, 107-123, 229
Karacafenk 157-158
Karagöz in Almania 198
Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri (Yakup Kadri) 12, 107-125, 145-146, 150, 152
Kashua, Sayed 186, 190-200
Kayseri 157
Kâzım Karabekir 125, 126, 131, 136, 138
Kemal Tahir 149
Kemalist regime 130
Ken'an Rifâi 150
Ken'an Rifâi and Muslim belief in the light of the twentieth century 150
Kilpatrick, Hilary 39
Kingdom of Jordan 208
konak 145
Köprülü household 94
köşe yazarları 144
Kucher, Primus-Heinz 189, 195, 198, 199
Küçük, Yalçın 161
Kudret Haliki 133
Kues 65, 66
Kurdish 157

Lacanian Real 51
Lambo 145
Land and the Book, the 207
language reform (Turkish) 147
Late Ming 83
Latin 65, 66, 68, 69, 70
Lausanne 129, 138
Lausanne Peace Conference 128, 129, 136
Lawrence 187-190
Layla 213
Lebanon war 194
Lebon 145
Leibniz 43
Lejeune, Philippe 9, 11, 36, 38, 43-49, 51, 52, 108, 131, 166, 173, 174, 178
Les Mots 45
Libya 222
life plan 55, 151
life stories 9, 14, 15, 55, 146, 159, 166, 220
life text 55
Li-mādhā tarakta l-ḥisāna waḥīdan (Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?) 204
liminal figure 203, 215
Lina 187-190
literacy 86, 87, 89, 90
literary: community 13, 143-152; convention 12, 38; genre 11, 36, 39, 65, 71, 72, 83, 84; historian 36, 90, 101, 104; magazine 147; memoirs 143; scene 87, 153; tradition 38, 73, 75, 208; culture 87
London 13, 128, 130, 140
love of nation 107
Lutheran 69

Machoism 194
Maçka Palas 146
Madness and Civilization 45
Magazine 9, 13, 144-147, 149, 150, 152

Mahdi 195
Mahvash, Banu 220
*Mai ve Siyah*152
Majnun 213
Malcolm, Janet 221
male biography 58
male bonding 69
Manderscheid 71
Manisa 110, 112, 113, 167
manual 39, 88-91
manuscript 38, 67, 70, 86, 87, 88, 89, 91, 92, 93, 95, 101, 126, 130, 140, 148, 193, 221
Marcus, Laura 102-103
Mardin 151, 165
Markiz 145
Martyr 14, 205, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215
Mascuch 84, 85
master narrative 208
master, see also Sufi master 87, 88, 89, 92, 94, 95, 96
Matbuat Hatıralarım (My Press Memoirs) 144
Mauss, Marcel 39
Mawsim al-hijrah ilā 'l-shimāl (Season of Migration to the North) 194
Mecca 195
mecmūʿa 85, 94-95
medical discourse 56
medical history 56
medievalists 84
medrese 137
Mehmed IV, Sultan 94
Mekteb-i Mülkiye 145
memoirs 125, 126, 147, 150, 152
Memoirs (Halide Edib) 126, 127, 147, 152
memory: community 13, 143; researcher 143; dynamics of 57
men of letters 147
Menfa 12, 101-105, 125
Mental Illness and Psychology 45
Message, The 222
metafictional game 166
meta-literary autobiography 14, 203-204, 215
middle brow literature 87
Middle East 9, 10, 12, 20, 37, 87, 223, 228, 229, 230
Middle East History 37
Middle Eastern literature 9
Midhat Paşa 125-126
migrant 14, 200
Milani, Farzaneh 14, 219-225, 229
Miller, Nancy K. 108-109
misantrography; misantro-graphy 130-131, 138-140
miscellany 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 96
Misch, George 35, 43, 65
Mısri, see Niyazi-i Mısri 12, 88-96, 230
mixture of genres 73
mode of being 61
mode of existence 61
models of identity 122
modernity; modern era 83, 86; modern man 45, 46; modern self 46, 213; modern subjectivity 84, 86; modern Western society 76
Mohammad, the Messenger of God 221-223
monade 43
monastery 67, 71
monograph 37, 117, 230
Montaigne, Michel 84
Mortiz, Karl Philipp 45
Moroccan society 40
Moscow Treaty 128
Mosel, the river 65
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 53
Müceddid/reformist 137
Muhammad 211-212
Muhit 135
Mukkaddes Reis 133
münci 133
Mungan, Murathan 165, 166, 169
Munqidh min al-dalal,al- (Saviour from Error) 35
Murad V 104
Muslim autobiography (see also Islamic autobiography) 35, 36, 38-40
Muslim world 10
Mussolini 136
Mustafa Kemal 12, 13, 107, 116-117-118, 120, 121, 122, 125, 128-140, 149, 150, 152, 153, 155; see also Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal
Mustafa Sa-id 194
Mutterzunge 186, 198, 199
mystical ghazal 208
mysticism 150, 230
myth 59, 122, 125, 131-132, 145, 205, 208, 212, 227
mythic creation 205
mythopoeic poet 205, 215

name of the author 46, 47
Namık Kemal 103, 104, 151
narrative; narrative collaboration 55; narrative discourse 46; narrative model 143, 145; narrative of discontinuity 127, 132; narrative of illness 55
narrator 11, 21, 24-28, 44, 47, 53, 67, 75, 108, 111, 121, 116, 121, 126, 127-140, 153, 162, 166, 176, 190, 191
nasīb 208
nation 12, 28, 31, 47, 107, 109, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 125, 126, 127, 129, 131, 135, 136, 137, 139, 193, 194
National Army (Turkish) 137
national Kemalist revolution 150
national tradition 151
nationalism 115, 116, 120, 122, 136, 150
nationalist cause 118
Nationalist Struggle 116, 117, 121; see also see Turkish National Struggle
Nazi 188
Nâzım Hikmet 149, 155
Necip Asım 134
Neşet Sabit 153
Network 40, 70
Neuwirth, Angelika 203-217, 228
new man (yeni adam, yeni insan) 153
New York 169, 177
Night Classes/ Nocturnal Lessons (*Gece Dersleri*); 160, 161, 162
Nişantaşı 14, 174, 176, 178, 180
Niyazi-i Mısri 12, 88-91, 230
nobility 68
non-bourgeois societies 36
non-Turk 136, 185, 200
non-Turkish ethnic elements 152
non-Western literatures 10, 84, 108
nostalgia 113, 127
Nous Deux 187
Novalis 205, 206
novel 9,10, 13, 14, 17, 19-26, 29, 43, 52, 83, 101, 103, 104, 125, 144, 147, 148, 151-154, 159-162, 166, 169, 173, 174, 178, 180-181, 185-198, 227, 229
Novelist 12, 45, 101, 104, 125, 144, 146-147, 151, 166-168, 220-221
Nuṣb al-Ḥurriyya (Freedom Memorial) 190
Nuremberg 69
Nutuk 13, 120-122, 125-138, 140
Obenzinger, Hilton 207
objective category 76
objectivity 102, 118
Ohne Leitbild/Parva Aesthetica 175
ontology (ontological) 10
oppressive regime 188
oral tradition 146
orality 86
Orhan Kemal 149
Orient Institut 9, 20, 22, 227, 228, 230
Orientalism 37, 207, 229
Originality 48, 137
Orpheus 205
Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası 127
Osmanlıca 147
Öteki Renkler (The Other Colors) 174, 178, 180, 183
Other, the 10, 16, 59, 61, 119, 126, 185, 195, 199, 207, 209, 229
otherness 25, 61, 199
Ottoman and Seljuk heritage 129
Ottoman: biographical dictionary 85; central government 93; chronicle 88; Empire 12, 13, 23, 85, 86, 87, 90, 107, 118, 127, 132, 152, 155; epistolary literature 90; identity 119; literary culture 83, 85; literati 83, 85, 86, 89, 91; literature 83, 94; society 87, 96, 151; Turkey 12; Turkish society 109, 116; world of letters 87
Ottoman Turkish see *Osmanlıca* 23, 94, 109, 116, 129, 151, 152
Ottoman-Turkish context 129
Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals 151
Out of Place 186, 196, 197, 198, 201, 202
over-westernized dandy 151
Oxford, University of 186
Özdamar, Emine Sevgi 10, 17, 19, 28, 30, 31, 186, 198, 201, 202
Öztoprak, Hasan 166, 169

Pacte Autobiographique, Le see also Autobiographical Pact 41, 62, 173, 183
padişah 133
Paige 84, 85, 98
Paker, Saliha 21, 157, 158, 162, 163
Palestine 194, 196, 203-205, 207, 208, 210-215; Palestinian Arab society 192; Palestinian collective 209; Palestinian intelligentsia 213; Palestinian resistance move-

ment 205; Palestinian society 191, 192, 193, 211, 215
Pamuk, Orhan 7, 14, 30, 125, 141, 166, 168, 169, 173, 174, 176, 178, 180-183, 227, 229
Paranın Cinleri (The Djinns of Money) see Murathan Mungan
Paris 13, 35, 41, 62, 128, 130, 140, 177-180, 183, 205
Park Oteli 145
Paşaların Kavgası 125, 126, 140
Pascal, Roy 43, 49
patriciate 68
patriotic enthusiasm 153
patriotism 115
patron 71
patronage 71, 76, 229
"Pencereden Bakmak" (Looking Out of the Window) 14, 173, 174, 178
Pera Palas 145
performance/text 125
Perin, Cevdet 150
persecuted minority 189
Persian 25, 90, 92, 151, 219, 221, 229-230
persona 47, 88, 162, 203, 208
personal history 44, 215
personal life 44, 72, 117, 220
personal narrative 25, 89-90, 93
personal struggle (*şahsi kavga*) 134
personality 12, 13, 35-38, 44, 55, 102, 103, 109, 110, 112, 115, 117, 122, 144, 145, 194
personhood 39
perversity 139
pessimism 117-118, 122
philosopher 35, 59, 66, 94
philosophy of history 43
philosophy of language 44
Pliz, Gottlieb Theodor 53
Plath, Sylvia 51
Pluie, La (The Rain) 186
poetry 10, 12, 14-15, 24, 39, 43, 72, 90, 144, 146-147, 152, 160, 199, 203-215, 219-221, 224, 229-230; poet 12, 14, 19, 26, 69, 101, 145-147, 149, 152, 154, 167-168, 203-215, 219-221, 229; poethood 204, 213; poetic form 69; poetic persona 203; poetical tradition 211; poetics 12
polemics 72-74
political activism 159
political inferiority 194
political opponent 120, 125, 128, 136
politics 54-56, 59, 67, 77, 130, 137, 161, 182
post-colonialism 9, 56, 108; post-colonial stance 56; post-colonialist theory 56
postmodernism 9, 56, 108; postmodern literary experiments 166
post-structuralism 9, 108; post-structuralist discourse 51
poverty 158-160, 162
pre-history of autobiography 85
pre-modern 38, 65, 77, 83
pre-print literary culture 84
Prickeimer, Charitas 69
print technology 87; printing house 144, 145, 146, 147; printing press 86, 96
private sphere 39
privatization of reading and writing 86
Prometheus 203
propagandists 152
protagonist 35, 39, 44, 47, 51, 53, 78, 131, 138, 143, 161, 166, 173, 178, 187, 192, 194, 195
Protestant 71, 207
prototype 36, 152
Proust, Marcel 14, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 181, 183
psychiatric institution 45
psychic structure 40
psychotherapy 224
public sphere 10, 22, 23, 25, 28, 36, 39, 52, 67, 69, 70, 86, 88, 92, 94, 102, 103, 104, 107, 112, 113, 114, 117, 118, 119, 121, 129, 130, 131, 139, 141, 146, 147, 148, 159, 162, 166, 182, 187, 192, 196, 204, 205
public figure 104, 131
public persona 162
public story 10
publishing see print technology
pure autobiography 52
pure biography 52

Qadi, Widad al- 39
qaṣīda 208
Qays 213
Qurʾān 90, 94, 97, 195, 211, 222, 223, 230
Qurʾānic 210, 230

race 37, 55, 136, 138
rabīl 208, 209

Raik'in Annesi (Raik's Mother) 125, 140
Rakım İbrahim Efendi 95
Ramallah 194, 205
rape 95, 138
Rashīd Būjadrah (Rachid Boujedra) 186, 200
Rashid Rida 37
reading community 144
reality 11, 23, 69, 76, 151, 152, 165, 166, 194, 198, 204, 206, 208, 214, 215, 219
reason 12, 38, 44, 45, 48, 57, 72, 73, 75, 86, 87, 90, 92, 96, 107, 117, 136, 138, 139, 143, 167, 174, 185, 186, 189, 191, 195, 196, 197
recognition of Turkey 128
redemptive power 214
referentiality 44, 223
reflexive self-expression 40
Reformation 69, 71
relational notion of self-representation 107
relational selfhood 109
relations of power 198, 206
religiomystical literature 88
religious doctrine 70
Renaissance scholars 84
Republican era 148
Republican People's Party 120, 128-129, 133
Reşid Efendi library 91
Resimli Ay 147, 149
resistance fighter 210
resistance poetry 204
Reynolds, Dwight F. 11, 38
Rhodes 102, 104
rite de passage 212
rite of commemoration 212
ritual 159, 212, 214-215
Rıza Nur 13, 125, 127-132, 138-140
Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes 130
Roman Catholic 68-69
Roman Church, see also Holy Roman Church 65-66
Roman Senate 133
Rosen, Lawrence 40
Rosenthal, Franz 35, 38, 87
Rousseau, Jean Jacques 9, 43, 45, 101, 102, 129
Rumeli Hisarı 145
rumor 159
rupture 127, 160-161
Ruşen Eşref (Ünaydın) 148
Saʿdi-Rifaʿi 88
Sabahattin Ali 153
sacred ground 207
sacred history 37, 210, 213
sacred text 13, 131-132, 134
Safa, Peyami 153
Sagaster, Börte 20, 25, 165-168, 230
Said, Edward 37, 196
Saint Augustine 35
Salinger, J.D. 51
sanctification 134
Sarīr al-gharība (The Bed of the Stranger) 204, 213
Sarton, May 56-57
Sartre, Jean Paul 58, 60
satire 53
Saudi Arabia 195
Savior 132, 133
Saxon 69
Scarry, Elaine 56
scrapbook 88, 90-92
Second Constitutional Period 109
Second Intifada 191
secular history 37
Seductions of Biography 222
Selefi 94
self 10, 12, 14, 20, 35, 38-41, 43, 45-46, 48, 59, 61, 66, 71, 73-74, 84-86, 102, 104, 108-109, 116, 122, 129, 130, 136, 138,139, 146, 154, 165-167, 180, 185, 188, 224; self-account 185; self-aggrandizement 135, 137; self-authorization 160; self-awareness 51, 119; self-censorship 104; self-conscious individual 143; self-consciousness 108, 213; self-creation 108; self-definition 159; self-encyclopedia 128-129; self-expression 40, 224; self-formation 113, 122; selfhood 41, 61, 62, 108, 109, 110; self-identity 109, 112-113, 116, 119-120, 122; self-interpretation 35; self-legitimization 126, 135; self-location 213; self-narrative 13; self-perception 55, 213; self-portrayal 35, 109; self-referentiality 223; self-reflection 39, 72, 101; self-representation 13, 39, 108, 122; self-sacrifice 209-210; sense of self 55, 109
self-imposed exile 125, 128
Selma 187
semantic 45
sergüzeşt 86

sergüzeştname 102
serial 122, 154, 146, 148, 152
Sertel, Sabiha 147
Sertel, Zekeriya 147, 149
Servet-i Fünun 144-145, 152
Sessiz Ev (The House of Silence) 174
Şevket 181
Sevük, İsmail Habib 101
Shâdiyah 193
shahīd (martyr) 205, 211, 212
sheikh 88, 145
short story 14, 173-174, 178, 192
significant other 108, 110
simplified Turkish (*öz Türkçe*) 147
sincerity 30, 43
single-party regime (Turkey) 13
Sinop 90, 127-128, 136, 138
Siyasi Hatıralar 125-126,131
Smith, Robert 40
Smith, Sidonie 108
social construction 76
social context 66, 68, 70
social group 59, 69, 70
social mobility 68
social position status 68, 75
social practice 12, 66, 71
social space 11
social stereotyping 56
sociology 44, 191
sofra (dinner table of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) 148
sohbet-circles 145, 148-149
sohbetname (book of conversation or companionship) 86, 93-94
sohbet-parties 145-146
sohbet-society 146, 153
solipsist 126, 131, 138
sovereignty 118, 133
Soviet Russia 128
Soviet Union 149
spiritual individual 37
spiritual pedigree 88
St. Augustine 9, 35, 84
Stein, Gertrude 52
stepmother tongue 195
stereotype 55
structuralism (structuralist) 45, 47, 130-131, 134, 158
Struggle, the, 13, 116-117, 138; see also Turkish national struggle
subaltern subject 56
sub-genre 12, 39, 53-54
subjectivity 45-47, 65, 76, 84, 86, 102; subjective experience 59
subject-position 46-47
sub-textual level 165
Sufism 12, 87-89, 92-96, 125, 230; Sufi circles 88, 92, 96; Sufi-order 145
Sultanate 128, 136-137, 139
Swiss Legal Code 137
Switzerland 68, 118-119, 127

Şeküre 181

Tahrir Square (Baghdad) 190
tale 225
Tan 147
Tanin 147
Tanpınar, Ahmet Hamdi 104, 153
Tanrıdağ 128
Tanzimat period 101, 152
Tanzimat'tan Beri Edebiyat Tarihi 101
Tarhan, Abdülhak Hâmid 146
Tarih 94
tasavvuf 150
Tayyib Salih, al- 194
Tekin, Latife 13, 157-158, 160
Tekke 137
Tel Aviv 189, 191
teleological perspective 85
Tepebaşı 145
Tepeyran, Ebubekir Hâzım 125
tercüme-i hal (biography) 86, 101
territorial states 68
Terzioğlu, Derin 7, 12, 20, 83-97, 230
Teşrinisani Kararı (The November Decree) 128, 136
tevarih 94
Tevfik Fikret 145, 147
textual homeland 206
textuality 96
thanatographie 61
The Turkish Ordeal 122, 126, 130-131
theology 67
theoretical Sufism 88
theorist 45, 54, 85, 108
Thomson, William M. 207
Tokatlıyan 145
Toklas, Alice B. 52
topographic image 178

topoi 59
Toros, Taha 145
tragic break 161
transcendence 59, 135
trans-cultural perspective 77
trauma of authorship 160
Triple Entente 118
Tunis 90
Türk Birlik Revüsü / Revue de Turcologie 128
Türk milletin banisi 133
Türk Ocağı (Turkish Hearth) 147, 152
Türk Tarihi (Turkish History) 128, 137
Türkçü Party 129, 136, 139
Turkey 9, 10, 12, 19, 23, 24, 28, 117, 119-121, 125-133, 135-140, 144, 149, 151-154, 165, 167, 227, 229; Turkification 152, 199; Turkish culture 128; Turkish historiography 120-121; Turkish history, see also modern Turkish history 13, 23, 109, 116, 121, 125-126, 128-131, 135, 137, 139, 140; Turkish humanism (*Türk hümanizmi*) 150; Turkish literary scene 159; Turkish literature, see also modern Turkish literature and Turkish autobiographical literature 9, 10, 12-14, 20-21, 83, 101, 107, 143-144, 151, 153, 166, 227-230; Turkish nation 12, 109, 114, 116-121, 125, 127, 128, 131, 136, 137, 150; Turkish national history 125, 127; Turkish national struggle, 12, 109, 114, 116, 119, 121, 148, 150, 152-153; see also Independence Struggle, Turkish nationalist movement, War of Independence; Turkish people 117-120; Turkish Republic 10, 12-13, 23, 28, 107, 129, 131-132, 138, 148, 150; Turkish society 9, 109, 114, 116, 148, 166; Turkish-Muslim women 148; Turkishness 130, 130, 138, 199
Tutunamayanlar 154

ulema 86
ulu Gazi 133
unconscious 118, 162, 219
unified identity 219
uniqueness 43, 84
United States of America 177, 196
united subjectivity 46
universal validity 206
unsaid, the 224
Untouchables of India 119
Uşaklıgil, Halit Ziya 152
Üss-ı İnkılap (The Basis of Revolution) 104
Utanmaz Adam 153
Utilitarian 151
Uzun Bir Adam (A Tall Man) 167, 169

Vani Efendi 94
Vatan Yolunda: Milli Mücadele Hatıraları 117-121
vernacular 69-70, 87, 95
Vieillesse, la 57, 59-62
virtual space 174, 180-182

War of Independence (Turkish), see Turkish National Struggle
Watson, Julia 108
we-group 143
West 9, 11, 15, 54, 83, 102, 151, 182, 196; Western autobiography 12, 84, 101, 109; Western civilization 150, 153; Western cultures 10; Western imperialism 116; Western literatures 87, 103; Western mandate 118; Western people 108, 146; Western world 14, 54; Westerners 118
Westernization 47, 83, 150-152; rise of the Western individual 71
West Bank 208
"What is an author?" 11, 45
When the Grey Beetles Took Over Baghdad 186, 187
Wiesner-Hanks, Merry 69
womanhood 58
women's rights 147; see also feminism
World War I 109, 114, 116-117, 119-120, 127, 152
World War II 177, 188
worldview 144

Yaban 153
Yahia, Mona 187-191, 196
Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı) 146
Yakup Kadri, see Karaosmanoğlu, Yakup Kadri 12, 107, 109-122, 135, 145-146, 148, 150-153
yarı aydınlar 153
Yavmiyyāt al-ḥuzn al-ʿādi (A Diary of Daily Sadness) 204
Yedigün 9
Yeni Hayat (The New Life) 174
yevmiyyāt 94

Young Ottomans (*Yeni Osmanlılar*) 12, 103-104
Young Turkish revolution 147, 152
Young Turks 147
youth 51, 58-60, 103, 110, 114, 122, 139, 187, 190, 196, 204, 212
yüce Gazi 133
Yusuf Nesib Dede (Mevlevi Dervish) 92

Ziklas (English family) 151
zillulılah-ı filarz 133
Zonis, Marvin 9, 37, 223
Zübdetül Hakayık (Essence of Reality) 105

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