The Language of Politics, The Politics of Language: The Political Literature in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic

by

Ali Bolcakan

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Comparative Literature)
in the University of Michigan
2021

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Artemis Leontis, Chair
Professor Kevork Bardakjian
Assistant Professor Kristin Dickinson
Professor Elizabeth Wingrove

Ali Bolcakan

bolcakan@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-6444-7026

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Abstract

This project analyzes the crucial role played by language politics in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. Situating the rise of ethno-nationalist monolingualism within a longer history of multiple language reform movements, I argue that language was a central domain for articulating ideas of nation, modernity, and ethnic purity. Focusing on the Armenian, Greek, and Turkish communities, I show how standardization and vernacularization movements served to further the dissolution of a multiethnic, multi-confessional and multilingual society and how such ethnolinguistic imperatives fueled both symbolic and material forms of violence and exclusionary policies. I focus throughout on texts by people who were born as subjects either of the Ottoman Empire or the Turkish Republic. Through these figures, I explore the complexities of the rise of nationalist monolingualism: in their lives and in their texts, I suggest, these writers reveal the blurred boundaries between political, religious, and cultural affiliations that were both hallmarks of Ottoman multilingualism and a catalyst to its destruction.

Following an introduction that outlines the key historical turning points in the late Ottoman Empire, I take up three case studies in which language politics and practices reveal nationalist aspirations shaped both with and against the specter of ethnic and linguistic uniformity. In Chapter One, I explore the internal conflicts in Greek politics and culture, before and after the Greek Revolution of 1821, and I analyze how the Greek language question was shaped by perceptions of the Ottoman Empire and the figure of the Turk. In Chapter Two, I examine the secularist underpinnings of the Turkish language reforms and the state-sanctioned

translation project of the Qur'an: Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy) was tasked with the translation, but as a religiously devout person, Âkif feared that his translation would be utilized by the state in the service of its secularization project. Âkif's simultaneous acceptance of vernacularization in his translation and his refusal to "Turkify" Islamic religious practice show the complex dynamics in Turkey of the 1920s and 30s. Turning to the Armenian community of the Turkish Republic in Chapter Three, I probe how two members of the Armenian community of Turkey, Hagop Martayan and Zaven Biberyan, operated within the framework of Turkish language reforms and Turkey's broader policies targeting Turkey's minorities. These two figures demonstrate different modes of belonging and mechanisms of resistance and integration in unexpected and contradictory ways.

The envisioned contributions of this project are specific to the fields of Armenian, Greek, Turkish, and Ottoman studies, as well as to the discipline of Comparative Literature. This project shifts the focus to language and literature from the dominant economic, political, and military perspectives in scholarship about the emergence of modernity and nationalism from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. Additionally, my account of the rise of monolingualism in the Ottoman Empire contributes to scholarship in multi- and monolingualism studies and to interdisciplinary research on language politics.

Introduction

Istanbul of the 19th century was a predominantly a non-Muslim city comprising Armenians, Bulgars, Greeks, and Sephardic Jewish subjects of the Empire, as well as Europeans with diverse religious affiliations. By the mid-20th century, however, the city's demographics had irreversibly changed due to the Armenian Genocide, World War I, the mass population exchange between Greece and Turkey, and various other forms of expulsions and migrations, such that only 5 percent of its inhabitants were non-Muslims. Today, right-wing Turkish politicians, especially members of the Islamist governing party AKP [Justice and Development Party] boast that Turkey's population is 99 percent Muslim. This radical transformation is at the heart of this dissertation project. My research examines the dissolution of the multiethnic, multi-confessional and multilingual condition in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkish Republic and demonstrates how Istanbul exhibits rare complexities in the shifting patterns of self-identification and cross-cultural relations that are otherwise generally analyzed in a transnational framework. The transition moves from the Ottoman Empire, with its non-Western modes of institutionalized hierarchy, inequality, and difference, to the modern Turkish nation-state, which still reproduced, albeit unofficially, hierarchy, inequality, and difference that were congruous with the values of European fascism.

By looking at language politics, this project charts the change of the imperial conditions of nations (both as states and as people) as they are first conceived and then consolidated. I argue that the rise of various ethno-linguistic nationalisms and the carving out of the vast territory of the Empire are inextricably bound. Concentrating on the radical changes that happened through

1

the 19th and early 20th centuries, my project focuses on language politics, through which I analyze the mechanisms of control of religious, cultural, and socio-political diversity in a non-Western Empire with a non-Western nation-state infused with European laws and values. I observe that language became a site of contention within the Empire's Greek, Ottoman Turkish, and Armenian communities starting in the 18th century. Over the last two centuries of the Empire, Ottoman subjects, or at least people who were born as Ottoman subjects, placed an increasing importance on language as an element critical to the national identity formation of social groups. Moreover, they sought to control the future evolution of the language by purifying presumed incorrect forms and so reducing the language's dialectal and lectical diversity by purging foreign loanwords that had been in circulation for centuries and working toward conformity and standardization. Their treatises on language took a polemical form that proposed the recomposition of not just language but political society. It is crucial that Greek, Turkish, and Armenian debates, which critics tend to discuss separately in Greek, Turkish, and Armenian national contexts, share important late Ottoman connections. One of the contributions of my dissertation is to place these language debates together in their late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican contexts by charting the rise of monolingualism, often tied to ethnonationalist movements, and its effects in different communities, and to show how the rise of monolingualism in the Ottoman Empire can supplement the existing scholarship in the field of multi- and monolingualism studies.

As opposed to studies that treat the phenomenon of cultural and literary transformation in isolation and from a singular, nation-based vantage point, especially in the case of Armenian, Greek, Ottoman and Turkish contexts, this study is an attempt to bridge different languages and approaches and treat them in a transcommunal and transnational framework. Its envisioned

contributions are both specific to the fields of Armenian, Greek, Turkish and Ottoman studies and to the broader discipline of comparative literature and interdisciplinary research on language politics. The project shifts the focus to language and literature from existing scholarship that traces the emergence of modernity and nationalism from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic primarily from economic, political, and military perspectives. Indeed, it is the next logical, necessary step in the renewed analyses of the Ottoman Empire from a cultural standpoint. This project analyzes Ottoman examples of language debates to offer a non-Western, non-postcolonial point of comparison. The important non-Western examples I discuss, mostly unknown outside of their linguistic and national context, expand upon a number of findings and conclusions on monolingualism. For example, David Gramling argues, on the basis of mainly Germanic and Anglophone examples from European and North American contexts, that "upon its scientific discovery in the seventeenth century, monolingualism became a vehicle for European Enlightenment, for mass literacy and organized anti-absolutism, for populaces who have at least a fighting chance at understanding their governments and laws."[1] In contrast, my project, focused on Greek, Turkish, and Armenian examples, shows that the switch to monolingualism in the Ottoman/Turkish context presents tensions between the stated aim of greater participation and processes of social fracturing and exclusion that were rarely visible in other socio-political contexts. That is to say, linguistic and literary vernacularization trends were almost always intertwined with symbolic (exclusionary, assimilatory forms of monolingualism and literary canon formation) and actual violence, such as the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange in 1922.

---

[1] David Gramling, *The Invention of Monolingualism*. Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 1.

For the creation of an idealized "national" community, a language with mythical prowess and purity was necessary.[2] In this sense, language reforms are linked to an idealized sense of community whose cement—and participatory potential, as suggested by Gramling—is language; but, in the complex multilingual linguistic contexts of the Ottoman Empire, the efforts of purification always came at the expense of the construction of an "other," excluded community whose language(s) were deemed foreign, alien, harmful, and backward thus to be rejected.

This project focuses on the Late Ottoman Empire and the first few decades of the Turkish Republic. The Ottoman Empire was a political entity formed at the end of the 13th century and continued to exist until shortly after the end of the first World War, when much of its territory was partitioned and the Sultanate was abolished by the Turkish Republic in 1922 after the Turkish War of Independence. During the Ottoman Empire's existence its territory comprised sizeable portions of North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeastern Europe. As such, its inhabitants were peoples of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. This project is primarily focusing on the imperial capital of the Ottoman Empire and the cultural center of the Turkish Republic, Constantinople/Istanbul, both as a site of production of texts and ideas, and also as the locus of texts and ideas that target the Ottoman Empire and/or the Turkish Republic. In this project, I focus on three dominant groups within the city with well-established domains and networks of commerce and culture: Armenians, Greeks, and Turks.

A productive comparative example for the multilingualism of the Ottoman Empire and the language politics of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries leading up to the First World

---

[2] Burton Feldman and Robert D. Richardson, *The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680-1860*. Indiana University Press, 1972. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. Andrew Von Hendy. *The Modern Construction of Myth*. Indiana University Press, 2002. Marc Nichanian. *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire*. Translated by G. M. Goshgarian and Jeff Fort. Fordham University Press, 2014. Marc Nichanian. *The Historiographic Perversion*. Translated by Gil Anidjar. Columbia University Press, 2009.

War is the case of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The empire's shifting multilingual composition, especially that of Prague, has been the subject of excellent contemporary scholarship. Scott Spector's *Prague Territories*,[3] Judson's *Guardians of the Nation*[4] and Yasemin Yildiz's *Beyond the Mother Tongue*[5] all problematize the notions of mother tongue; multilingualism and competition between languages within a singular political body; and what it means to belong to the said body depending on the usage of a certain language. As Yildiz notes, "for the multilingualism of the empire increasingly shifted from being constituted by subjects with diverse multilingual competences to a multilingualism constituted by the side-by-side existence of a series of monolingual communities."[6] In their works, Spector, Judson and Yildiz demonstrate that it was language that ultimately determined in the last instance the place and role of a community in the larger society, where a predominantly Czech speaking majority and a German speaking bourgeoisie, primarily Jewish, were at odds with each other.

Even a brief comparison of the constantly changing linguistic frontiers of the Habsburg Empire can complicate considerations of the linguistic composition of the Ottoman Empire. Certainly, it demonstrates that matters of standardization and purification are not unique to the history of Turkish, Greek, and Armenian language varieties with the rise of the Turkish Republic. But what makes the monolingual paradigm at work in the late Ottoman Empire significant in itself and valuable for comparison with other contexts is that it is one of the few examples in which the issue of diglossia and an extreme linguistic reinvention, in the form of standardization and purification, coalesce in a non-colonial and/or a non-postcolonial setting.

---

[3] Scott Spector. *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Kafka's Fin de Siècle*. University of California Press, 2000.

[4] Pieter M. Judson. *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

[5] Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. Fordham University Press, 2012.

[6] Ibid., p. 30.

Specifically, in the case of the language reforms that the Turkish state implemented, in addition to the language question, different questions such as religion, ethnicity, nation-building become enmeshed and complicate the issue even further.

The Ottoman Context and Theoretical Considerations

In the late 18th century, the Ottoman Empire underwent significant processes of decentralization. The Ottoman economy was predominantly agrarian and most of its subjects were engaged in subsistence farming.[7] Covering a vast geography, the Empire stretched from modern day Algeria in the West, to the Caspian Sea in the East, and from Ethiopia in the South to Transylvania in the North. But almost all of these provinces were being overseen by local governors, and the Ottoman authority over them was tenuous. This eventually led to brigandism, which created a deep sense of instability throughout the Empire.

Following the disastrous wars of the 17th century, the Sultan's authority and grasp over this vast territory and peoples were challenged and undermined by the 18th century Ottoman governors like Ali Pasha of Ioannina and a series of hospodars in Wallachia and Moldovia, the advent of Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula, and revolutionaries such Rigas Feraios (Velestinlis) who espoused a Pan-Balkanism.[8]

While Ottoman society was very diverse ethnically, with the majority of its subjects being "Albanians, Arabs, Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Kurds, Serbs, Turks, and Vlachs,"[9] it primarily stratified along Muslim and non-Muslim religious lines; as an Islamic state, the Ottoman Empire privileged Muslims. The next century, 19th, In Ottoman historiography, the

---

[7] See Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, eds. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914,* Cambridge University Press, 1994.
[8] See Hanioğlu, "Chapter 1." *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire.* Princeton University Press, 2008.
[9] Ibid., p. 44.

Tanzimat Era corresponds to the period between the promulgation of the Tanzimat Edict of

Gülhane (*Tanzimat Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif*) in 1839, and 1876, when the Ottoman Constitution

(*Kânûn-ı Esâsî*) was formally announced, or in 1878, when the constitution was suspended after

the disastrous Russo-Ottoman War.[10] During this period the Ottoman state implemented a series

of modernizing reforms to reorient the state as a Western/European one. Through these

successive modernizing reforms, the Ottoman government hoped to change the status quo to

create a more equitable society which in turn would curb internal irredentist movements. The

existence of the Tanzimat Edict was also in response to the demands of the Ottoman bureaucrats,

who wanted the administrative process to become more coordinated and less dependent on the

capricious whims of the Sultan, and also to the demands of the foreign powers. The Tanzimat

Edict of Gülhane of 1839 was not merely a legislative act; it was a social contract, expressing the

duties and responsibilities of the state and subjects to one another. The edict articulated its raison

d'être as the guarantor of the "perfect security for life, honor, and fortune"[11] and for the first time

introduced the idea of equality among the Ottoman subjects.

The Imperial Reform Edict of 1856, *Islahat Fermanı*, reiterated the basic tenets of the

Tanzimat Edict by guaranteeing equal opportunities and standing in education, justice, and

public service. It further guaranteed the sphere of influence that religious authorities maintained

over their congregation, while also enacting new measures that regulated fees and salaries

collected by non-Muslim religious officials. This internal reorganization of the "millet" system

---

[10] For more information about the modernization efforts see Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963; and Banu Turnaoğlu, *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism*. Princeton University Press, 2017.
[11] Hans-Lukas Kieser. *Nearest East: American Millenialism and Mission to the Middle East*. Temple University Press, 2010, p. 37.

unified religious institution, language and education and paved the groundwork for the Ottoman Armenian National Constitution/Regulation in 1863.

These edicts ushered in an era of unprecedented communication and exchange of ideas, both among the Empire's different communities and with foreign states and individuals. Starting in the 1830s, large numbers of Ottoman subjects were sent abroad for ambassadorial, administrative, trade, educational, and cultural purposes. This meant that for the first time, slowly, a like-minded group of Turkish-speaking Muslim intellectuals could emerge. This group later came to be known as the Young Ottomans. It is important to note that throughout the 19th century, state policies and individual political orientations were in constant flux. The trifecta of Turkish nationalism, Islamism and Ottomanism constantly vied for hegemony, leading to complicated alliances and dalliances. For example, Namık Kemal, arguably the most famous representative of the Young Ottomans, experimented with all three of these ideas in his writings to some extent as these ideas themselves hadn't fully matured and crystallized into separate entities. While they didn't have a unified and a cohesive program or an ideological orientation, the work of the Young Ottomans paved the way for the dissemination of ideas of the possibility of opposing the Ottoman policies, the administration, and even the Sultan himself, and they laid the groundwork for parliamentarism throughout the Empire. The Young Ottomans were involved in a coup, which ultimately ended in Abdülhamid II ascension to the throne 1876.[12]

In 1876, for the first time, the Ottoman Constitution[13] (*Kânûn-ı Esâsî*) of 1876 was announced and was generally warmly received. The 8th Article, and the first article of the Public Law subsection, clearly put forward Ottoman as a meta-identity: "All the subjects of the Empire

---

[12] Hanioğlu, 2008, p. 109.
[13] For an English translation see "The Ottoman Constitution, Promulgated the 7th Zilbridje, 1293 (11/23 December, 1876)." *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1908, pp. 367–387.

are without distinction called Ottomans no matter what religion they profess."[14] While the constitution did not have a separate article directly postulating a national or an official language, Article 18 indirectly introduced Turkish as the official language of the Ottoman Empire for the first time: "Admission to public office has a condition—the knowledge of Turkish which is the official language of the State"[15] ["*Tebaa-i Osmaniyenin hidematı Devlette istihdam olunmak için devletin lisan-ı resmisi olan Türkçeyi bilmeleri şarttır*"]. Other articles also mentioned the use of Turkish in parliamentary sessions, and the expectation that in 5 years all parliamentary representatives should be able to have a command of reading and writing in Turkish.

The Tanzimat Era was followed by the Hamidian period, which started with the rise of Abdülhamid II to power in 1876. In 1878, he prorogued the Parliament and suspended the constitution. This period lasted until 1908 (and a year later Abdülhamid II was deposed), and it is marked by Hamidian despotic rule, repression and reversal of the gains made during the Tanzimat Era, and unprecedented violence towards the Empire's subjects, especially Armenians. It was hoped that the Ottoman Constitution would serve as a binding mechanism, rather than implementing further comprehensive reforms; but the Hamidian Era was marked by an adoption of an increasingly Islamist policy. During this period, Young Ottomans were stripped of their power and relegated to the sidelines, but their legacy and the ideas they had spearheaded did indeed continue to live on in the form of influence on the next generation of Ottomans, especially the students of military and medical schools of the Empire in Constantinople and Salonica. These students received a positivist, Western style training as an extension of the Tanzimat reforms. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was such a student, for example, as were many others who later became the leaders of the Ottoman Empire after 1908. This generation developed an

---

[14] Ibid., p. 368.
[15] Ibid., 369.

even more secular worldview and political orientation and thus opposed the pan-Islamist ideology of the Hamidian regime. This group became what is known as the Young Turks. They were markedly different from the Young Ottomans in a crucial way, however, and that was, as their name suggests, Turkish nationalism. The Young Turks, by and large, became affiliated with the Committee for Union of Progress (CUP), rallying against the common cause of taking down the Hamidian regime. The CUP had garnered support from Greek and Armenian political organizations before 1908; but the multiconfessional alliances drastically changed as the CUP adopted an increasingly fervent rhetoric of Turkish ethnic and linguistic nationalism with limited Islamist leanings.

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908[16] restored the Ottoman constitution and the parliament and introduced even more rights and freedoms. In 1909, as result of a countercoup, Abdülhamid II came back to power for 16 days, but the CUP and its allies, managed to return to power quickly. However, the joyous atmosphere surrounding the return to the 1908 spirit, especially supported by the non-Muslims of the empire, dissipated quickly. As mentioned above, the CUP received support, but with some limitations and reservations, from a diverse number of non-Muslim organizations and political parties. But the CUP and Young Turks became more invested in pursuing a Turkish nationalist ideology.

As Hanioğlu notes, "in 1911 the Union of All Ottoman Elements, a public affairs committee, published an appeal to all Ottomans to form a united front, it did so in nine languages: Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Ladino, Serbian, Syriac (in two different scripts, Nestorian and Serta), and French."[17] There were still others it left out.

---

[16] For in-depth examination of the Young Turk movement see Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*. Oxford University Press, 2001; and idem, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, Oxford University Press, 1995.
[17] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History* , 2008, p. 33.

While the Ottoman state didn't shy away from multilingualism when it needed to appeal to the masses, its imposition of Turkish as an official language on all the subjects of the Empire followed a growing sense of linguistic nationalism.

It is important to note that Turkish nationalism and especially its extremist form, Turanism (a form of Turkish ultranationalism, or Panturkism, which mythologized the ancient Turkic roots and promulgated the idea of a vast pure Turkish state from the Middle East to Central Asia) was incompatible with not only Ottomanism, but also pan-Islamist policies of the Hamidian Era, as this ideology did not recognize and wanted to change the equality among all Muslims, a tenet that had been the policy of the empire, and Islamic political entities in general, since it was established. As a result of the rise of Turkish nationalism, the ideas concerning "Turk" and "Turkish" were radically reevaluated and reconceptualized for the first time. Arnakis emphasizes the radical novelty of Turkish nationalism as such:

> The old practice of associating the name "Turk" with the uncultured and uncouth peasant or nomad of the plains still persisted in the 1880's and a sharp distinction was drawn between the city Turk, who called himself an Osmanli, and the man from the countryside. The peasant's speech was not the refined Osmanli Turkish, replete with Arabic and Persian phrases, but it was the *kaba Türkçe* (coarse Turkish) that was shunned by good society.[18]

These ideas coalesced in 1911 and *Yeni Lisan* [New Language] movement was formed by nationalist writers such Ömer Seyfeddin and Ziya Gökalp. Rather than defending a reformist approach they proposed a radical purification project, cleaning the language of all foreign words.

The Greek and Armenian Communities in the Late Ottoman Empire

It is extremely difficult to summarize and convey what the Armenian and Greek communities were, as these were not monolithic entities but comprised a multitude of economic,

---

[18] George G. Arnakis. "Turanism: An Aspect of Turkish Nationalism." *Balkan Studies,* no. 1, 1960, pp. 19–32, p. 25.

religious, political, social, and cultural positions. For example, many Armenians and Greeks served in the Ottoman parliaments, while others advocated for total independence from the Empire and still others resisted the modernizing reforms for fear of losing their privileged position granted by the very discriminatory configuration of the empire. What follows is intended only as a cursory glance at the post 1821 late Ottoman history vis-à-vis Armenian and Greek communities, broadly construed.

Brief Overview of the Greek Community

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries Greek subjects were an integral part of the Ottoman administration. They served as the governors of Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, which was arguably the only way for a non-Muslim to hold secular political power. They also occupied central diplomatic roles, such as the Grand Dragoman, which is a unique Ottoman bureaucratic position that included translational and diplomatic duties akin to a Minister of Foreign Affairs. But the proclamation of Greek Independence in 1821, and the ensuing Greek Revolutionary War and formal recognition of the independent Greek State by the Ottoman Empire culminated in a great reshuffling of the Ottoman social, political, and cultural spheres. The Greek Independence movement became a blueprint for other Balkan nationalist independence movements, such as in Bulgaria and Serbia. Many members of the leading Greek families who occupied seminal positions within the Greek patriarchate and the Ottoman administration had already joined the revolutionary struggle. This also caused rifts within the Ottoman administration; the last Greek dragoman was executed, and the prominence of Greek subjects in the Ottoman bureaucracy rapidly began to diminish. Yet as the memory of the Greek Revolution faded, Greek subjects began to return to positions of prominence. There were still

Greeks who inhabited high echelons of power even up until the dissolution of the Empire, and Greeks were involved in the drafting of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 and were members of the Ottoman parliaments. A very large Greek population remained in the Ottoman Empire, primarily concentrated in Constantinople, Salonica, and Smyrna.[19] Constantinople, where the Greek Orthodox inhabitants of the city was more numerous than in Athens, continued to function as a vibrant center of Greek political, social, and cultural activities.[20]

In 1862, a Greek General Regulations was issued by the Ottoman state.[21] While this was not as comprehensive as the Armenian Constitution/Regulation of 1863, this new arrangement consolidated all Eastern Orthodox Christians under a new administrative reshuffling. An important change was that "the religious administration would not only be run by the clergy but also involve lay leadership,"[22] which meant that, for the first time, religious authorities would share power with secular authorities. But consolidating all Orthodox to the yoke of this new administration caused strife between Greeks and non-Greek Orthodox communities, which led to the fragmentation of Orthodoxy and the formation of autocephalic churches, pitted Greeks

---

[19] For a collection of essays that discuss the economic, socio-political and cultural aspects of Greek life in the Ottoman Empire see Dimitri Gondicas & Charles Issawi, eds. *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*. Princeton: Darwin Press: 1999; and for an analysis of the literary and intellectual history see Johann Strauss. "The Greek Connection in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Intellectual History." *Greece and the Balkans*, edited by Dimitri Tziovas. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 47-67.

[20] For more information about the *Rum* millet see Victor Roudometof, "From Rum Millet to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society, 1453–1821" *Journal of Modern Greek Studies,* vol. 16, no. 1, May 1998, pp. 11–48; Dimitri Stamatopoulos, "From Millets to Minorities in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire: Am Ambiguous Modernization," *Citizenship in Historical Perspective*, edited by S. G. Ellis, G. Hálfadanarson, and A. K. Isaacs. Pisa, Italy: Edzioni Plus-Pisa University Press, 2006, pp. 253–73. Richard Clogg, "The Greek Millet In the Ottoman Empire,: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society,* edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis. Holmes & Meier, 1982, pp. 185-207.

[21] Ayşe Özil. "Ottoman Reform, Non-Muslim Subjects, and Constitutive Legislation: The Reform Edict of 1856 and the Greek General Regulations of 1862." *Narrated Empires. Modernity, Memory and Identity in South-East Europe.* Edited by J. Chovanec and O. Heilo, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 169-190.

[22] Ibid., 176.

against other communities in the Empire and the Greek state against other Orthodox states in the Balkans.

While there had been debates about the Greek language and Greek diglossia before the revolution, following the Greek Revolution, the question of which form of Greek to employ as the official national language (ancient, vernacular, or a middle form) became a highly contested topic. Two main camps emerged: supporters of an intermediary language, *katharevousa,* espoused the adoption of an ancient Greek inflected language, while defenders of *demotiki* argued for the adoption of a vernacular form of language. The language question quickly became a central issue in Greek politics and spread to almost all aspects of life. The Ecumenical Patriarchate promoted *katharevousa* while Constantinopolitan Greeks created numerous linguistic, cultural, social, and political associations promoting with varying agendas.[23] Associations such as the "Greek Philological Association" acted like an education ministry aiming to create schools, develop an archive and library of Greek texts, disseminate Greek learning, and cultivate Greek nationalism in the Orthodox population, fostering education in demotic Greek. In the late Ottoman Empire, through the acts of such associations and wealthy patrons, the Greek community created numerous new schools and hospitals, and other centers serving both the community and others. But as much as these associations brought linguistically like-minded individuals together, the language question proved very divisive in general. It must be emphasized at the turn of the century, there was no solid correlation between a certain political orientation and a linguistic affiliation. But if a certain individual's linguistic affiliation was deemed improper by authorities it led to trouble for that person. For example, the prolific

---

[23] See Dimitris Stamatopoulos, "From Cratylus to Herder: Dimensions of the Language Question in the Ottoman Empire (Late 19th Century)." In *Language, Society, History: the Balkans*, edited by A.F. Christidis et. al. Thessaloniki: Centre for the Greek Language, 2007, pp. 253-264; George A. Vassiadis, *The* Syllogos *Movement of Constantinople and Ottoman Greek Education 1861-1923*. Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 2007.

short story writer and educator, Alexandra Papadopoulou was dismissed from her teaching position by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, because Papadopoulou was a supporter of *demotiki*.

Brief overview of the Armenian Community

The Armenians took up more and more important posts following the Greek Independence, and became entrenched in Ottoman public life, especially in Constantinople, in an unparalleled manner. It must be emphasized that the Armenian community was also not a uniform bloc. Armenian Catholics were formally recognized as a separate community in 1831 and Armenian Protestants in 1850. This led to tension between the communities; the Armenian Church regarded it as a threat to the Church of Armenia and the unity of the Armenians. The Catholic Armenians and Protestant Armenians no longer owed allegiance to the Armenian Church and were considered separate entities. The small Protestant community quickly organized its internal administration but there was prolonged strife within the Catholic community between those who preferred Papal administration and those who advocated local internal autonomy. As before, all three communities continued to use both modern Armenian and Armeno-Turkish and the problem of choosing between Classical Armenian and Modern Armenian as the national standard became mainly a problem between liberal and conservative forces.

The Armenian language question also loomed large over the Armenian community. Long before the rise and fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (11th to 14th centuries), Classical Armenian, *գրաբար* [*grabar*], had become confined to the writing language of the clergy, while Middle or Cilician Armenian had become the administrative and literary language in Cilicia and beyond. Following the collapse of the Cilician Kingdom, out of the numerous dialects and Classical Armenian itself there evolved two principal dialects: Western (Armenians in the

Ottoman empire, and Europe) and Eastern (Armenians in the Russian and Persian empires).[24] A

book of high importance for Western Armenian in the Ottoman Empire was the publication of

Gate to the grammar of the vernacular language by Mekhitar Sebastatsi in 1727.[25] This

grammar book for the promotion of modern Western Armenian vernacular, *աշխարհաբար*

[ashkharhabar] targeted the Turkish speaking Armenians of the Ottoman Empire, and was

composed in Armeno-Turkish.

As the idea of nationalism permeated Armenian communities, Armenian emerged as the

chief pillar of Armenian identity and the most effective tool of unity. The main concern was to

ensure a practical method of communication "for the Armenians dispersed far and wide who

spoke various, often mutually unintelligible, dialects."[26] While Modern Armenian had been used

by all three major religious institutions for proselytization and religious propaganda, the

Armenian Church, the Mekhitarist Congregation, and conservative elements and intellectuals all

defended the adoption of Classical Armenian on the grounds that it was a fully developed, single

language, in contrast to Modern Armenian, which comprised numerous dialects and was seen to

be tainted by other languages and lacking divine splendor. The liberals, on the other hand,

promulgated a vernacular approach, arguing for the convenience of continuous use of already

existing Modern Armenian and the difficulty of imposing the adoption of Classical Armenian. A

---

[24] For an examination of the development of classical, middle, and modern varieties of the Armenian language see Kevork Bardakjian. "The Rise of Modern, and Modern Western Armenian: a Cursory Glance." (forthcoming). And also idem, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920: with an Introductory History*, Wayne State University Press, 2000.

[25] For more information about the book and a historiography of Armeno-Turkish see Sebouh Aslanian "Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites: Abbot Mkhitar's 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar for Vernacular Western Armenian," *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies*, vol. 25, 2017, pp. 54 –86; for an analysis of Armeno-Turkish, especially its use in literature, see Murat Cankara, "Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1 –16; for a comprehensive bibliography of Armeno-Turkish books see Hasmik A. Stepanyan. *Hayadaṙ tʻurkʻerēn krkʻeri ew hayadaṙ tʻurkʻerēn barperagan mamuli madenakidutʻiwn; Ermeni Harfli Türkçe Kitaplar ve Süreli Yayınlar Bibliografyası (1727 – 1968); Bibliographie des livres et de la presse Armeno-Turque (1727-1968),* Istanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2005.

[26] Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature,* 2000, p. 102.

western Armenian dialect with predominantly Constantinopolitan elements became the de facto Modern Western Armenian standard in the second half of the 19th century.

The Mekhitarists, a brotherhood of Armenian Catholic monks (Benedictine Rule), deserve a special mention for their efforts to study and promote the Armenian language. In the 18th century, the Armenian Church's intolerance forced them to flee to Europe, first to Methone, Morea, then to Venice when Morea fell to the Ottomans. The Order split in 1773 and a group of dissenters met in Trieste and permanently settled in Vienna in 1811. From the outset, the Mekhitarists conducted research into various aspects of Armenian culture, including the Armenian language and its various stages of development from Classical to Modern Armenian. Language was a real focus of unity, since religion (owing to denominational differences) would play a less important role. And for more than a century, they fought battles to revive Classical Armenian; ironically, their research defined the main contours of and enabled Western Armenian to triumph by the 1860s-1870s. It was the Mekhitarists[27] who first staged Turkish language plays in their monastery on the islet of San Lazzaro, Venice, in the 18th century. Later, their students played a considerable role in organizing the Armenian theaters in Constantinople. Armenians introduced Western Theater to the Ottoman public, staging performances in Armenian and also in Turkish. When the company of Güllü Hagop (Agop Vartovyan) at the Gedikpaşa Theater, the birthplace of modern Turkish theater, was given by the Ottoman government the monopoly of staging plays in Turkish, it began almost exclusively to perform in Turkish, while simultaneously it adversely suppressed the other Armenian theaters and curbed the development of Armenian language theater in Constantinople.[28]

---

[27] For more information about the Mekhitarist order and the Mekhitar Sebastatsi see Kevork Bardakjian. *The Mekhitarist Contributions to Armenian Culture and Scholarship*. Cambridge, Harvard College Library, 1976.
[28] For a discussion of Armenian Theater see Kevork B. Bardakjian. *Hagop Baronian's Political and Social Satire*. 1979. Oxford U, Ph.D. Dissertation; for a recent and short overview of Ottoman Theater with particular attention to

A turning point for Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire was the Armenian National Constitution of 1863, which was unique among the non-Muslim communities. This constitution for the first time the emerging modern Armenian intelligentsia a nominal share in governing the community and curbed the control and influence of the Armenian Patriarchate and the Amiras.[29] Throughout the 19th century and especially after 1863, this provided another impetus and practical relevance for the Armenian liberals and intelligentsia to press ahead with the cause of modern Armenian. In the process, the language was refined and purified according to Western standards into a flexible medium, modeled, in some respects after French.[30] The Armenian National Assembly, sanctioned by the constitution, was one of the fora where modern Armenian took shape through countless speeches, as were the Armenian periodical press, literature, and the numerous schools set up in Constantinople and the Eastern provinces of the Empire.

It is important to note that, in the latter half of the 19th century, while Armenians rose in stature in the Ottoman public, while they venerated and gloried in their language and its unique alphabet, they also became targets of state violence: the Hamidian massacres in 1894-1896 and the Adana Massacre of 1909. The end of the Hamidian Era and a change in government and policy did not change the treatment of Armenians. As also under the CUP regime, these

---

Turkish and Armenian relations see Fırat Güllü. *System Crisis and Theater in the Ottoman Empire: Representation of the Late Ottoman System Crisis in Theatrical Plays*. Istanbul: Libra Books, 2017; for a recent evaluation of the seminal importance of Armenians for Ottoman theater with an analysis of Turkish nationalist coopting of this history see Elif Baş. "The Role of Armenians in Establishing Western Theatre in the Ottoman Empire." *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2020, pp. 442-463.

[29] For more information about the Amira class see Kevork Bardakjian, "Ottoman Servants, Armenian Lords: The Rise of Amiras." *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, vol. 26, 2017, pp. 17–38; Richard E. Antaramian. *Brokers of Faith, Brokers of Empire: Armenians and the Politics of Reform in the Ottoman Empire*. Stanford University Press, 2020; Hagop L. Barsoumian. *The Armenian Amiras of the Ottoman Empire*. Yerevan, American University of Armenia, 2006.

[30] For the French influence in Armenian language question see James Etmekjian. *The French Influence on the Western Armenian Renaissance, 1843-1915*. New York, Twayne Publishers, 1964, and idem, "Western European and Modem Armenian Literary Relations up to 1915." *Review of National Literatures: Armenia*, edited by A. Paolucci and V. Oshagan, Vol. 13. New York: Griffin House Publications, 1984, pp. 64–92.

massacres became precursors to the Armenian Genocide of 1915 during WWI, which decimated the Armenian population and the Western Armenian language.

Multilingualism and Monolingualism

Building on these histories of language reform—which are replete with attempts to standardize and purify languages that were increasingly recognized as "national"—this dissertation addresses the rise of monolingualism to the detriment of multilingualism. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ideas about having a primary, singular, distinct native language, essentially different from others and that language corresponded to an authentic national, ethnic identity became more prevalent. These ideas ultimately divided and fragmented peoples who had managed to co-exist, however precariously, for centuries. My case studies have been selected to feature people with competing and contradicting modes of belonging to an empire, to a nation, to a religion, and to a language.

The way I approach multilingualism is with attention to three stages of linguistic diversity and their disappearance. In the first stage, we see the classical and vernacular forms of the languages co-existing together. Multiple dialects and accents also coexist side by side, and cross-pollination between languages is unhindered by any governance or standardization efforts that might stop the permeation of loanwords across languages. Hybrid languages such as Armeno-Turkish and *Karamanlidika* (vernacular Turkish written in Armenian and Greek scripts, respectively) were naturally occurring during this timeframe and were not seen as problematic or out of the ordinary. In the second stage, we find that language slowly becomes a seminal marker of distinction, especially in settings influenced by ideas of nationalism. Attention turns to standardization. The proliferation of journals, newspapers, books, travel, trade, and changes in

administrative policies, especially centralization, all contribute to the search for practical, accessible communication on a mass scale between the speakers of the different forms a language. In this stage, languages are arguably contracting by excluding and expelling what is perceived as foreign, alien and possibly dangerous, or simply difficult and impractical. But significantly, there is still a multiplicity of forms of each language, though within a narrower view of what the language should be and a contracting number of dialects and scripts, as negotiations over what the new languages should look like give birth to a variety of proposals. For example, in the Greek case after the formation of the Greek state, different historical forms of ancient Greek, as well as different vernaculars, were theorized and considered as possibilities for the official language. In the third, last stage, we see the entrenchment of the principles of monolingualism, as the perceived bond tightens between ethnic communities and their languages tightened. In this phase, communities reach consensus, albeit often contested, on accepted modes of diction, grammar, dialect, and accent for an official language. Here, I don't mean to suggest that the adoption of a language variety and the simultaneous rejection of other varieties implies the end of the teleological journey of any given language. But there's a consensus, or rather the imposition of an official language, along with a sense of what the most appropriate diction, grammar, dialect, and accent should be.

For most of its history the Ottoman Empire did not have an official or a national language. The broader language question had not been settled and was under constant negotiation between Ottomanist, diverse nationalist, and religious positions. Johann Strauss emphasizes the pluralistic aspect of the Ottoman Empire as a society that was divided by religion, language and script, at the same time that religion, language, and script didn't

necessarily overlap.[31] Having "a single national language only became important when ordinary citizens became an important component of the state; and the written language had to have a relation to the spoken language only when these citizens were supposed to read and write it" (1068-1069).[32]

As Yildiz emphasizes in discussing Germany's modernization, the issue was not multilingualism per se, insofar as each language was partitioned and sealed off from other ones; what this "position cannot abide is the notion of blurred boundaries, crossed loyalties, and unrooted languages."[33] Monolingualism constitutes a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social life, from the construction of individuals and "their proper subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as of imagined collectives such as cultures and nations."[34] It established the idea that having one language was the natural norm and that multiple languages constituted a threat to the cohesion of individuals and societies. According to Pool "the choice of official languages involves an inevitable compromise between efficiency and fairness... Efficient neutrality, exemplified in church-state separation and racial nondiscrimination, is held inapplicable to language groups, because governments can simply ignore races and religions, but must use, and thus choose languages."[35]

At this juncture, it is imperative to note the incompatibility of the idea of difference in a nationalistic framework. The pre-19th century condition of heterogenous co-existence of languages, religions, and cultures changed into a more hybrid form of co-existence, where hierarchical composition showed signs of change through successive reforms that promoted

---

[31] Johann Strauss. "Who read what in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?" *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures* vol. 6, no. 1, 2003, pp. 39-76.

[32] Eric Hobsbawm. "Language, culture, and national identity." *Social Research*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1996, pp. 1065-1080.

[33] Yildiz, p. 8.

[34] Ibid., p. 2.

[35] Jonathan Pool. "The Official Language Problem." *American Political Science Review,* vol. 85, no. 02, 1991, pp. 495–514, p. 496.

equality to all. I argue that the modernization reforms in the late Ottoman Empire brought people closer than ever but also conversely as ideas concerning nationalism and nation states took hold, especially when they gripped the Ottoman administration in early 20th century, these ideas made it more difficult than ever for diverse people to be together.

In the Ottoman Empire after 1908, and in the Turkish Republic after 1922 we see what David Gramling calls "cosmopolitan monolingualism," which "implicitly acknowledges the plurality of languages spoken among a given populace, but resorts to segregative strategies … in order to minimize the effect of multilingualism on public life."[36] Especially the Turkish state saw multilingualism as a detriment to its wholesale standardization efforts not only of language but also of religion, modes of belonging and political participation. We thus find in the early 20th-century Turkish context a situation not unlike the cosmopolitan monolingualism that Gramling sees in 21st century Germany: "upholding cultural diversity while discouraging the public use of multiple heritage languages … or cosmopolitan monolingualism" became a key strategy and was "as a public policy strategy … rooted, paradoxically, in the recognition that multilingualism has become a societal norm."[37] The extant, multiethnic, multi-religious, and multilinguistic configuration of the Ottoman Empire was highly undesirable after the rise of the Turkish Republic precisely because people belonged to multiple categories. In contrast, the nationalist policies of the Turkish Republic set out to aggregate and ideally to fuse these different modes of belonging. İlker Aytürk explains, "the language reform was considered a means of democratization, a process that would lead to the closing of the gap between the languages of the ruling elite and the masses. It was suggested that a standard Turkish made available through the

---

[36] David Gramling. "The New Cosmopolitan Monolingualism: on Linguistic Citizenship in Twenty-First Century Germany." *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German,* vol. 42, no. 2, Fall 2009, pp. 130–140, p. 131.
[37] Ibid.

schooling system would facilitate and eventually bring about the active participation of every

citizen in the decision-making process."[38]

This project is interested not only in the naturally occurring complexities before the

advent of monolingualism but also in the contradictory occurrences as it was being conceived. In

this dissertation I tell the story of the many twists and turns of multilingualism and

ethnolinguistic nationalism by focusing on multiple historical figures and their works in each

chapter. Through these figures, I not only show how ethno-linguistic nationalisms were

construed but also, more importantly, tell the story of recalcitrant figures. Each of these figures

were caught in kinds of several double binds and had to grapple with choosing one language over

another, or one form of language over another form of the same language. Thus, some of them

contributed to the rise of monolingualism, even at times against their own better judgement, and

even when that very monolingual paradigm stands in opposition to their own political, cultural,

social, and religious beliefs.

The scholars, language reformers, translators and literary authors featured in my case

studies wrote in diverse genres and they reflect a diversity of ethnic, religious, and socio-political

backgrounds. Their texts are marked by negotiations between a political, mostly national, sense

of belonging and a cultural and linguistic identity. Together their lives and works testify to what

recent scholars have argued is the mystification of a natural relationship between a motherland

and a native language, or the notion of a "mother tongue." As Rey Chow argues, "any illusion of

a natural link between a language as such and those who are, for historical reasons, its users by

---

[38] Sadri Maksudi [Arsal], *Türk Dili İçin*. Ankara: Türk Ocakları İlim ve Sanat Heyeti Nesriyatı, 1930, quoted in İlker Aytürk. "The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: the Language Council From 1926 to 1931." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 18, no. 03, 2008, pp. 275–293.

default"[39] was disrupted as a result of the colonial situation. But in the case of the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic, the disruption stemmed not from an external intervention but from an internal reconfiguration that still reproduced colonial mechanisms. It was the rise of nationalist sentiments that disrupted the linguistic heterogeneity of the empire, ultimately affirming Deleuze and Guattari's idea that there "is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity."[40] My case studies trace this process in the transition from linguistic pluralism to an official monolingualism, wherein a dominant language was conceptualized, created, and vanquished over others, and in turn served to expel, marginalize, or destroy the communities that spoke other languages.

Chapter Summaries

The first chapter, "The Greek Language Question and the Turkish Problem," studies texts about the Greek language communities in the Empire over the course of about 100 years when the neighboring Greek state was emerging. The Greek War of Independence erupted in 1821 and led to international recognition of the Greek State in 1828 and to the establishment and expansion of the Kingdom of Greece beginning in 1833, with Athens as its capital city. Yet because Constantinople of late 19th and early 20th centuries was more populous in terms of its Greek inhabitants than any city in the independent Greek state, it remained a major center for Greek cultural life until the interwar period.

My case study is the language politics that accompanied the national uprising and nation building and sought to standardize Greek to mark the identity of Greeks against that of the Turks

---

[39] Rey Chow. *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience.* Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 41.
[40] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus.* Translated by Brian Massum. New York: Continuum, p. 8.

and other ethnic groups and to legitimize their claim to be descendants of ancient Greeks. I am attentive to the divergent interests of the Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople, intellectuals, writers, and politicians in both the independent Greek state and the Ottoman Empire, revealing how linguistic, religious, and political affiliations and loyalties blurred and transgressed national and communitarian boundaries. In the first part of this chapter, I focus on how the pursuit of a modern Greek language fit for the nascent independent state was intertwined with anti-Turkish and anti-Islamic sentiments. This was true whether the language reformer wished to reconstruct an archaic form of Greek by purifying the vernacular language of its borrowed words and vernacular forms (*katharevousa*) or accepted that languages must evolve and tried to produce a systematic form of the vernacular for popular usage (*demotiki*). I analyze works by Demetrios Katartzes, Adamantios Korais, Ioannis Pscyharis. In the second half of the chapter, I explore the tense, complex cosmopolitan vision of Georgios Vizyenos in two of his short stories, "Who Was My Brother's Killer" (1883) and "Moskov Selim" (1895). These two stories articulate a language politics through language use rather than a treatise on language. Vizyenos's complexity—and the tension between the characters in his stories who offer and receive hospitality under hostile conditions of ethnic differences and try but have difficulty understanding each other—pushes against the narrow nationalist vision in the work of Korais and Psycharis that is explicitly hostile to Turks. All these figures and their works show the complex and contradictory ways language politics were intertwined with religious, ethnic, and social forms of belonging. For example, Korais and Pscyharis formulated opposing programs about what the common national language should be, and they did converge on what it should exclude symbolically, but not always on a linguistic level. And Vizyenos's stories are marked not only by this split, but also a split between

Greek and other languages, whether they are Western or Eastern, ultimately showing the radical alienation that the monolingual paradigm creates.

My second chapter, "Translating the Quran" analyzes the state's exaltation of an earthly language (Turkish) to the level of an inherently sacred one (Arabic). I focus on the dynamics between religion and language through a systematic analysis of the conservative responses to the Turkish alphabet and language reforms in the early Turkish Republic. The case study for this chapter is the Quranic translation project commissioned by the Turkish state as part of a comprehensive language reform that created a purified and standardized Modern Turkish and also as a nationalist secularist socio-political re-orientation project. Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy), an Islamist poet who also penned what later became the Turkish National Anthem, was tasked by the Turkish state to translate to Qur'an to Modern Turkish. Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy) was tasked with the translation, but as a religiously devout person, he feared that his translation would be utilized by the state in the service of its secularization project. Âkif's simultaneous acceptance of vernacularization in his translation and his refusal to "Turkify" Islamic religious practice show the complex dynamics in Turkey of the 1920s and 30s and constitute the main focus of this chapter.

My third and last chapter, "From Multilingualism to Monolingualism: Turkish Language Reforms and Armenians," examines how Turkish monolingualism affected the Armenian community by focusing on the life and works of the Armenian writers Hagop Martayan and Zaven Biberyan in the post-Genocide period in Early Republic Turkey. I posit the ethnolinguistic nationalism of the Turkish state against the prevalent Western reception of Istanbul through the figure of Erich Auerbach's exile in Istanbul. The experience of Martayan and Biberyan, I argue, is one of disenfranchisement within their own city and country. A high-ranking member of the

Turkish Language Association, Martayan (as Agop Dilâçar) officially worked for the Turkish state and was responsible for the creation of the new language of the nascent republic. But his collaboration also rendered him complicit in the state's criminalization and destruction of non-Turkish languages. Biberyan, on the other hand, not only actively resisted the fascist policies of the state, for which he was punished, but he also openly critiqued the role and position of religion in Armenian life. An analysis of these figures shows that they were not merely victims, exiled at home, but that they exhibited agency and a complicated relationship with mechanisms of power. Even as "exiles," both chose to resist and co-opt power in different, and sometimes opposing, ways, thereby offering an important counterexample to scholarship on German-Jewish émigré scholars who were based in Turkey, such as Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, in the same time period.

Chapter 1:

The Greek Language Question and the Ottoman Problem

> "Nothing else occupies my mind but liberty and the language. The former has begun to trample on the heads of the Turks, while the latter will soon begin to trample on those of the pedants."
>
> Dionysios Solomos

Introduction

The Greek language question, a debate that emerged in response to the situation of Greek *diglossia*, is a well-researched topic of scholarly inquiry. This chapter traces the history of the Greek language question in a focused way with attention to Greek national aspirations in the Late Ottoman Empire and the coagulation of a certain kind of discursive politics around language and representational strategies to analyze how they were intertwined with political, cultural and religious forms of belonging and non-belonging especially vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. Specifically, it pays attention to how arguments advocating one or another linguistic variant of Greek were formulated in contradistinction to not just the Ottoman Empire but more specifically the figure of the Turk, conceived as a less civilized people. This point has been

curiously overlooked. Language politics did not necessarily align themselves with any single political orientation, and allegiances and the meaning of the allegiances shifted over time. Nevertheless, anti-Ottomanism and especially anti-Turkish sentiment, i.e., Turkish-speaking Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire were present in almost all of the diverse branches of the Greek language debates. Both supporters of katharevousa and of demotiki in the 19th century, two opposing camps in terms of language politics, believed that the Turkish oppressors were uncivilized and barbaric. As secularism and the question of the ancient and Byzantine past were being negotiated in myriad ways, this discourse was markedly different from a revolutionary call to arms. In this case, the colonizer/sovereign was deemed not only unjust but unworthy of allegiance and without a comparison in the framework of civilizational advancement. In the 19th century. The political imaginary of the colonizer as barbaric became a binding force across the aisles of Greek language debates, in that it justified revolutionary politics, linking and merging national awakening through linguistic unification. One of the main conceptions concerning the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire and the Turks had to do with the state of Ottoman Turkish, that is to say, the use of the Arabic alphabet and the prevalence of Arabic and Persian elements within Turkish were significant markers of Eastern-ness. Therefore, the purification of Greek from Turkish, and thus the Arabic and Persian influences within it, was of utmost importance for the realignment of Greek politics and culture along Western and Enlightenment ideals and values.

In this chapter, I focus on politically charged works of non-fiction and fiction by Ottoman Greeks who grapple with Greek belonging in the Ottoman Empire. I consider a range of works and positions from the end of the 18th century to the late 19th century. For example, the *Didaskalia Patriki*, (*Διδασκαλία Πατρική*, literally Paternal Instruction)—issued in 1798 in

Constantinople by a leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church[41] in response to the French

Revolution—promulgated the idea that Ottoman sovereignty was divinely preordained to protect

Orthodoxy from the satanic influence of Catholicism and modern ideational maladies. This

position was in line with the elite Constantinopolitan Greek Phanariote view that the Greeks did

not deserve their own polity—expressed even by Enlightenment thinkers such as Dimitris

Katartzes (1730-1897) in his 1783 "Συμβουλή στους νέους πώς να ωφελούνται και να μη

βλάπτονται απ'τά βιβλία τα φράγκικα και τα τούρκικα, και ποιά νά 'ναι η καθ' αυτό τους

σπουδή" (Advice to the youth on how they should profit from and not be harmed by Frankish

and Turkish books and what should be their proper education). In stark contrast, Adamantios

Korais (1748-1833), another Enlightenment thinker, in his treatise of the next decade—*Adelphiki*

Didaskalia pros tous evriskomenous kata pasan tin Othomanikin epitrateian Graikous (*Αδελφική*

Διδασκαλία προς τους ευρισκομένους κατά πάσαν την Οθωμανικήν επικράτειαν Γραικούς,

Fraternal instruction for Grekoi found throughout the Ottoman lands, 1798, issued in Rome),

known simply as *Adelphiki Didaskalia*, or Fraternal Instruction—posits a secular historiography:

a discourse extolling the heritage of Ancient Greece and the ancient Greek language. Moreover,

he uses this historiography to promote civilizational advancement against the force of the

culturally mixed and therefore presumably backward Ottoman Empire. The same assumption of

the cultural backwardness of Ottomanism can be found 90 years later in Ioannis Psycharis's *My*

Journey (*Το ταξίδι μου,* 1888, published in Athens), a work promoting vernacular Greek squarely

against Korais's linguistic method, specifically in sections that focus on Constantinopolitan

Greeks and Ottomans in general. After discussing Korais's and Psycharis's discursive

---

[41] The authorship is commonly ascribed to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Anthimos 1717-1808, while others say it is by Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople, 1746-1821, see Richard Clogg, "The 'Didaskalia Patriki' (1798): An Orthodox Reaction to French Revolutionary Propaganda." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1969, pp. 87–115, for more information about the context and the authorship background.

representation of Greek-speakers freed from the Ottoman present, I compare their simplistic

notions of the Greek and Turkish coexistence to the more complicated representation in the prose

works of Georgios Vizyenos (1849-1896), specifically in the short story "Who Was My

Brother's Murderer" (1894) and the novella "Moskov Selim" (1896). The chapter is a study in

contrasts, though not the katharevousa vs. demotiki contrast to which scholars have attached

importance in their analysis of the Greek language debates. Here the language debates of Korais

and Psycharis are seen in parallel for their respective promotion of different forms of the Greek

language that use a very similar argument. Both recognize language as social practice and

advocate for the language specialist's right to define, reduce, and regulate the kind of language

recognized officially as Greek in order to expel foreign and particularly Turkish influence on

Greek social order. In contrast, Vizyenos's prose works present a complicated, heterogenous co-

existence of not only peoples but also languages.

Historical Background

Centuries before the Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821 and the independent

Greek state was recognized by the London Protocol of February 1830, the question of what kind

of Greek language should be adopted was already a matter of debate.[42] For the most part,

however, before the late 18th century, the issue was not yet about implementing a common

written form and standardizing the vernaculars of users of Greek who lived over a vast

geography in multiple polities. There were multiple strains of archaizing and vernacular Greek,

---

[42] Scholarship on the Greek language question is voluminous to say the least: see Geoffrey Horrocks. *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers*. Longman, 1997, for, a comprehensive account of the development of Greek language over millennia; David Mackridge. *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976*; Roderick Beaton's chapter "Literature and Language: The 'Language Question'" in his book *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature*. Clarendon Press & Oxford University Press, 1999, for the language question in the late modern period in English language scholarship.

used in different registers by artists, scholars, statesmen and the Church. Therefore, what marks the Greek case as special is the simultaneous co-existence of multiple forms of archaizing and vernacular Greek and an awareness that the choice between them signified some sort of cultural positioning.[43] Additionally, these two camps were not unified in themselves in terms of their religious and political affiliations. As Enlightenment[44] ideas circulated and intellectuals began rallying in support of the creation of an independent Greek state—and especially after the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1821—the language question became a highly charged topic. The question focused on the choice between katharevousa and demotiki, with proponents arguing for the superiority of a single form of the language. This issue wasn't resolved until 1976, when demotiki was adopted as the official language of the Greek state.

What is especially significant in the Greek case is the difficulty of using the terms monolingualism and multilingualism in a clear-cut manner. The rise of ethno-linguistic nationalism naturally meant the promotion and adoption of the Greek language and script for all Greeks. But between 1821 and 1976, for a period of a century and a half, even if Greek was naturally the language of the Greek state, there was not a single Greek language, but rather we encounter a proliferation of Greek languages in the 19th century. The Greek diglossia refers to the bifurcation between two camps of language ideologues, where one side espoused a form that was steeped in ancient Greek, with varying degrees of reliance on grammar and lexicon, and the other promoted the use of vernaculars, while it also produced grammars and lexicons. As such,

---

[43] That matter was ultimately resolved much later, first, in 1974, when the vernacular *demotiki* was adopted as the official language of the Republic of Greece and in 1981, the polytonic accent system was discarded in favor of the monotonic system.

[44] Almost all of Paschalis M. Kitromilides's seminal oeuvre deals with the question of Enlightenment in Greece. For example, see *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of Southeastern Europe.* Hampshire: Ashgate, 1994; *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosopis Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992; *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

depending on one's linguistic ideological orientation, what is "foreign" could have been a classical grammar element, or a vernacular dialectal pattern—still Greek and yet equally problematic.

There is a very important distinction to be made between the uses of Greek and other ancient languages such as Hebrew and Latin in the modern era. Greek continued to exist as a spoken language, in contrast to Hebrew and Latin. Moreover, it was not solely confined to religious matters or to higher levels of education but was being commonly spoken, in different forms and registers, throughout the Balkans, and the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. But its use as a language of higher education and learning also granted an air of "cultural distinction, as a means of transition to the status of civilized man."[45] In this sense, it was a marker of difference that distinguished the speakers of the language from everyone else, poised to become precisely a national language with the rise of nationalism, in addition to its cultural capital because of its connection to ancient Greek.

Beginning in the early 19th century, we see a change in the discursive practices that link language and script to a sense of new kind of national belonging. When we follow the work of Ottoman subjects writing outside the borders of the independent Greek state—whether they lived before the revolution or during the century that followed, when Greeks continued to dwell in large numbers in the Ottoman Empire and regions of the Eastern Mediterranean—we see them cutting across transnational, transcommunal and intracommunal boundaries. Though cosmopolitan, they become players caught up in efforts to raise Greek national consciousness.

---

[45] Antonis Liakos, "Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece: Time, Language, Space." *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, edited by Katerina Zaferi, Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008. pp. 201-236.

They contribute in important ways to the 19ᵗʰ-century revolutionary project of identifying who is Greek along cultural-historical, especially linguistic lines rather than religion. Language politics, specifically the effort to identify the precise form of Greek that captures both the prestige of their history and their living presence, is a major nationalizing, modernizing project, and here too Greeks-speaking subjects of the Ottoman Empire make important contributions. We can conceptualize the valorization of one particular language form over others and subsequent efforts of standardization both as a rupture moving away from tradition towards modernity and also as a radical shift from multilingualism to an exclusionary mode of monolingualism. The disappearance of hybrid languages of *karamanlidika* and *Armeno-Turkish* among the Ottoman Greeks and the rise of "pure," ordered languages show the coagulation of fluid and porous kinds of linguistic and cultural exchanges.

The situation and the position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Orthodox Church in general vis-à-vis the language question as it relates to the program of the enlightenment and self-realization of the Greek people in the form of independence from the Ottoman is decidedly complex. At crucial points the Orthodox Church articulated its vested interests in the Empire's continuation. Here I look briefly at a work from 1798, *Didaskalia Patriki*, a seminal text that defends the status quo as the course determined for the Eastern Orthodox people against the backdrop of the French Revolution. It is an ecclesiastical tract written in dense archaic, ecclesiastic Greek. Notably, its linguistic position is manifest in the archaizing, ecclesiastical language of the text. This is the contextually defined language of the Church at a time when multiple forms of Greek coexisted harmoniously. The author makes no reference to debates about the contemporary Greek language. The pamphlet is focused on the question of governance. Its primary argument is that the Ottoman government is blessed by

providence, whereas revolutionary ideas coming from the West are anathema. The author states that the Ottoman rule emerged as "out of nothing . . . by divine will" in 1453 for the singular purpose of saving the Orthodox people from their deviation from religious beliefs at the end of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire. In his words:

> See how clearly our Lord, boundless in mercy and all-wise, has undertaken to guard once more the unsullied Holy and Orthodox faith of us, the pious, and to save all mankind. He raised out of nothing this powerful empire of the Ottomans, in the place of our *Romios* [Roman/Byzantine] Empire which had begun, in a certain way, to cause to deviate from the beliefs of the Orthodox faith, and He raised up the empire of the Ottomans higher than any other kingdom so as to show without doubt that it came about by divine will, and not by the power of man, and to assure all the faithful that in this way He deigned to bring about a great mystery, namely salvation to his chosen people.[46]

The revolutionary ideas coming from the West are starkly contrasted as a grave threat to the Orthodox. He anticipates the deleterious impact that the French Revolution would have upon the morals of the Orthodox and advises unwavering loyalty toward the Sultan. What is crucial here is the deep seated anti-Western sentiment which informs a two-pronged argument: first, the forms of Christianity that are Western are perverted branches, and second, the Enlightenment ideas are antithetical to the Church doctrine. The Ottoman meddling in Church affairs is excused because ultimately the Ottoman Empire functions as a bulwark against further retardation of the Orthodox faith by both the Catholic Church and the dangerous ideas posed by Enlightenment which are seemingly good ideas that fundamentally contain a devilish deception and a terrible poison that will push people to the abyss, lead them to anarchy and to their destruction.[47]

The position of the *Didaskalia Patriki* was neither a complete outlier in its day nor specifically a theocratic position. Similar views were espoused by others—even those with

---

[46] Clogg, 1969, p. 104.
[47] Ibid., p. 105.

different linguistic concerns and solutions,[48] such as Dimitrios Katartzes in "Συμβουλή στους νέους" [Advice to the Youth][49] from 1783. Katartzes was an Enlightenment thinker (he published under the penname Photiades, meaning the one descended from light) and nationalist, who was one of the earliest high-profile supporters of demotiki. He was born in 1730 in Constantinople to a wealthy "Phanariote"[50] family. His father was the physician and an aide of the very important Mavrokordatos family. In the second part of his life, Katarztes lived in Bucharest, Moldavia and Wallachia and rose to the rank of Grand Logothet. He died in Moldavia.

Although Katartzes's position does not reflect that of all Phanariots or other notable Greeks, it is exemplary of people who got along with the Ottoman government and enjoyed their privileged positions. While Ottoman Greeks saw themselves as descendants of Ancient Greece and Byzantium, they did not consider it necessary or even possible to have their own state or to be part of a state that followed the principles of the French Revolution. For example, Katartzes took umbrage with the idea that the greatest wisdom was that of Ancient Greece and not that of the Christian Byzantine period. In his view, the dominance of ancient Greek texts and aspirations to imitate them stifled later forms of learning: "if great authors wrote in their own language, they would have written much more easily and therefore would have produced many more books. Our nation would have gained many books .... If I had tried to write what I have written in my natural

---

[48] There were a number of important demotiki supporters before the formation of an independent Greek state, such as Iosipos Moisiodax, Gregorios Konstantas, Athanasios Psalidas, and Dimitrios Katartzes. They claimed that Greeks should do what the modern European states do, and so they should use a language they can communicate with and use the folk's power and desire of speech, according to Dimaras, 1987, p. 149.

[49] Dimitrios Katartzes. "Συμβουλή στους νέους πώς να ωφελιούνται και να μη βλάπτουνται απτά βιβλία τα φράγκικα και τα τούρκικα, και ποιά νά 'ναι η καθ' αυτό τους σπουδή." *Ta Euriskomena.* Edited by C. Th. Dimaras. Athens, Greece, Ermis, 1970. pp. 42-71.

[50] Phanariots are prominent Greek families from the Phanar district of Constantinople, who occupied key positions in the Ottoman administration until the Greek Revolution of 1821 and the subsequent recognition of an independent Greek state when they fell out of favor with the state.

language with pleasure and easiness, in [ancient Greek], I would have toiled all my life but still wouldn't be able to articulate what I wanted to say exactly."[51]

Additionally, Katartzes carefully distinguishes between sharing origins and being identical. He recognizes that "those great people (Hellenes, ancient Greeks) are the ancestors of the Romioi, but he also asserts that Hellenes and Romioi have nothing in common . . . Hellenika and Romaika are not one but two separate languages . . . It is irrational to consider these two languages as one."[52]In this respect Katartzes defends a different kind of nationalism, one that promotes a national language but is to a major extent disconnected from the mythical past and a long sense of history. Furthermore, Katartzes believed that Greeks did not need necessarily need to have their own state, as they were still participating in governing acts:

> Thank God we are not like [enslaved peoples] ... It is true that we cannot take part in governing like those who govern us [Turks]; but still we cannot be considered to be completely outside of governing. The notables of the church bind us to each other and through them we are connected to governing/government: thus we constitute an *ethnos* [ethnic group/people/nation/race]. Most of these notables dabble in politics. Many of our political laws and all of church laws are recognized as "tradition" and "ritual" by the reigning government and carry a certain respect. Our *ethnos* owns property and small political systems that have privileges in many parts of Turkey .... [Many of our notables] take part in political life and conform to Aristotle's definition of citizen [*polites*]; and along with them, everyone who's under them: clergy, notables, those who have rights and rank, thus all Romioi...[53]

Written in 1785, 4 years before the French Revolution, this text takes on the subject of the importance of a national education and discusses participatory politics not through the direct involvement of citizens but through intermediaries, representatives who in turn stand in for the entire peoples. This was not a viewpoint easily shared by every Greek Enlightenment thinker.

---

[51] K. T. Dimaras, *Neoellinikos Diafotismos*. (Greek Enlightenment). Athens, Greece: Ermis, 1985, p. 216.
[52] Ibid., p. 219.
[53] Katartzes, "Advice to the Youth," 1970, p 44.

Unsurprisingly, the defense of the Ottoman status quo by prominent Eastern Orthodox elites of the Ottoman Empire from the author of *Didaskalia Patriki* to Dimitris Katartzes forced a radical rift between Orthodox elites and people with republican tendencies, pushing the latter towards a more secular politics that attacked the position of the Orthodox church directly. Among them was Adamantios Korais, who swiftly published a rebuke to *Didaskalia Patriki*.

Adamantios Korais

Adamantios Korais was born in 1748 in Smyrna. His family was originally from Chios. His father was a successful trader with contacts in Amsterdam who offered his son an exceptional education. Korais learned French, German, Latin, Italian, and Hebrew in Smyrna, then left Smyrna for Amsterdam to oversee business trade on his father's behalf at the age of 24. He returned to Smyrna after six years but left for Montpellier to study medicine in 1782. After his studies, he moved to Paris in 1788, where he was based until his death in 1833. Korais's main source of income in his Paris years came from his publications of his editions of ancient Greek texts as part of the Hellenic Library. Among them were works by Hippocrates, Heliodorus, Aelian, Isocrates, Polyaenos, Plutarch, Homer, Hierocles, Strabo, Aesop, and many others.

Korais was broadly opposed the Patriarchate and Ottoman elites and intellectuals like Katarztes who held that the Orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire, succeeded by the Ottoman Empire, was the foundational element of Greek identity and the Greek *ethnos* (nation). In contrast, he believed that Ancient Greece was the cornerstone. He was very suspicious of Byzantine kings, who, "unlike Russian Tsars" he emphasizes, "broke their own laws, levied unjust taxes and suffocated their own people, turned monarchs into theologians and dabbled in idiotic and unintelligent discussions of religious dogma, and squandered their peoples' blood and

toil for ordering churches and monasteries to be built, therefore weakening the city walls which ultimately led to the conquest of the Turks" (*Adelfiki Didaskalia*, my translation). Still the idea of the future, independent Greek nation he promulgated was not entirely one dimensional but an amalgamation. At its heart lay not only the descendants of Ancient Greece but also people who shared a living culture. As Beaton writes "[t]he key to his [program] for a future liberated Greece lies partly in the new insistence on the shared identity of a 'nation' and partly in the revival of the long-lost civilization of classical antiquity."[54] This view also perfectly encapsulates his ideas concerning language.

Given that language, despite its inevitable evolution, constituted the single most important cultural bond between classical and modern Greece, Korais facilitated modern Greeks' access to classical heritage by championing an ambitious and far-reaching language reform program.[55] Recognizing the impracticality of reintroducing classical, fifth-century Attic Greek as the official language of the would-be Hellenic state, he spearheaded a campaign to relieve vernacular Greek of all its medieval Byzantine and Ottoman influences. Korais came to the point of introducing a new Greek language idiom called katharevousa (or the purified [language]) that would combine the best of both the ancient and the living "linguistic worlds." It would enjoy the precision and wealth of ancient Greek, while maintaining the vibrancy and the liveliness of vernacular Greek. Katharevousa was conceived to be literally "pure" of most foreign language

---

[54] Roderick Beaton "Imagining a Hellenic Republic, 1797–1824: Rigas, Korais, Byron." *Comparative Critical Studies,* vol. 15, no. 2, 2018, pp. 169-182, p. 173.

[55] Mackridge notes Korais's "ideas on language were chiefly expounded in the prefaces to his editions of ancient Greek texts, beginning in 1804 with his edition of the Hellenistic novel *Aethiopica* by Heliodorus and continuing in the Precursor to the Hellenic Library (1805) and in the first six volumes of his series entitled Hellenic Library, published from 1807 to 1812" and emphasizes that his prefaces were titled as "Improvised reflections on Greek *paideia* [education/culture] and language". Peter Mackridge. "Korais and the Greek language question," *Adamantios Korais and the European Enlightenment*, edited by Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010, p. 130.

traces and "adulterations." Turkish, Slavic, and even Latin loan words were replaced to a large degree by ancient Greek words whose use had lapsed over the centuries or by new Greek words created specifically for that purpose. As noted by Gregory Jusdanis, "suppressing the oriental elements"[56] was a critical element of Korais's agenda overall. Hence, the new idiom would reinforce the claims of continuity between modern Hellas and the picture of classical civilization "already developed by European Hellenism."[57] The forms of words and their syntax, while approximating ancient Greek, would frequently draw on the constantly evolving vernacular language. Korais assumed that his language reforms would do heavy lifting for the emerging Greek nation state: the antiquity of words would lend authority through their confirmation of continuity, while the language's dependence on vernacular structures would make the language easier to adopt by speakers of vernacular Greek. By adopting katharevousa, the new nation-state would emerge as the legitimate legatee. At the grassroots levels, however, the situation looked very complicated. The existing contradictions would become clear when the message of the French Revolution reached the Ottoman lands and Greek War of Independence broke out in 1821.

All of Korais's writings are in his purist katharevousa, thus his writings were inaccessible to some readers of Greek and to the majority of Greek speakers who were illiterate. Even with a limited readership, however, his *Adelfiki Didaskalia* had a powerful effect, especially because it placed itself in opposition to Ottoman rule as the natural order for the Greek people. As mentioned above, Korais's text is a direct and total repudiation of the ideas of the *Patriki Didaskalia*. Korais takes umbrage with almost everything contained therein. His terms of

---

[56] Jusdanis, Gregory. *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 28.
[57] Ibid.

repudiation are influential. Notice his attention to tyranny and injustice and the complete identification of these terms with the Turks. He writes:

> Yes indeed, Christ and his followers taught submission to one's masters. But which masters? Those who are just and equal to their subjects. Unlike the Turks who are unjust and tyrannical. These are people who believe they are the only ones who deserve life and happiness and treat their subjects worse than how they treat unintelligible animals.[58]

In direct response to *Didaskalia Patriki*, Korais sees the author as a "collaborator" with the Turks who has a stake in the continuation of the Ottoman Empire. Korais calls the author "the friend of the Turks" multiple times. He sees the Ottoman Empire as the opposite of the just and equal polity that the Greek people deserve. "There has been no democracy; instead there is tyranny: indeed, there has never been more innocent bloodshed than what the Turks have done," writes Korais, and he adds that trying to calm Greeks' righteous rage would be tantamount to attempting to stop "their just [struggle] of reclaiming their liberty and freedom."[59]

Korais penned further writings throughout his life in which he emphasized the Turks' completely barbarous and therefore unjust treatment of their subject peoples. But more importantly, he argued that Turks deserved to be, they must be overthrown, not only because of their depravity, but because they were less civilized than the populations they had subjugated. We see a similar discourse employed without qualification in his essay *Salpisma Polemistrion* [Battle Horn] (1801):

---

[58] Adamantios Korais. *Adelfiki didaskalia pros tous evriskomenous kata pasan tin Othomanikin epikrateian Graikous: eis antrissin kata tis pseudonymos en onomati tou Makariotatou Patriarchou Ieroslymon ekdotheisis en Konstantinopolei patrikis didaskalis*. Rome, 1798, n.p.
[59] Ibid.

Because of the Turks, our common *patris* [homeland/fatherland], the *patris* of the arts and sciences, the *patris* of philosophers and heroes, has today become the home/dwelling of ignorance and barbarism, a true/real den of robbers, and of the most shameless Ottomans. For the Turks, we are reproached and despised by the Europeans, who, without the lights of Greece, would probably still be sleeping in the darkness of their ancestral barbarism. In such things and so many ways, friends and brothers, we are afflicted [επάθομεν] by the inhuman race of Muslims	Εξ αιτίας των Τούρκων η κοινή πατρίς ημών, η πατρίς των τεχνών και των επιστημών, η πατρίς των φιλοσόφων και των ηρώων, έγινε σήμερον κατοικητήριον της αμαθίας και βαρβαρότητος, αληθές σπήλαιον ληστών, των και απ' αυτούς τους ληστάς αναιδεστέρων Οσμανλίδων. Δια τους Τούρκους ονειδιζόμεθα και καταφρονούμεθα από τους Ευρωπαίους, οι οποίοι χωρίς τα φώτα της Ελλάδος ήθελον ίσως ακόμη κοιμάσθαι εις τον σκότον της προγονικής αυτών βαρβαρότητος. Τοιαύτα και τοσαύτα, φίλοι και αδελφοί, επάθομεν από το απάνθρωπον γένος των Μουσουλμάνων

Here the weight of his accusation falls directly on the Turk—and not (as in *Adelphiki Didaskalia*) on the Greek who collaborates with the Turk—and on the affliction of the Greeks who live under Turkish rule. The Turk is framed as the occupier of Greek lands who is nevertheless beneath the Greek and unworthy of their ancient homeland. The Greeks are dominated by them and at the same time reproached and despised by Europeans for this domination. Paradoxically the Greeks have offered civilization to the Europeans, though they do not have the power to oppose the tyranny of the Turks without them.

Almost the same year, in 1800, on the heels of Napoleon's conquest of the Ionian Islands and during his military campaign in Egypt, Korais penned a poem titled *Asma Polemistrion* [Battle Song]. The poem addresses Greeks as "compatriots," denigrates Muslims as "base" in addition to "tyrants," and points specifically to France as a "common fatherland":

My friends, compatriots	Φίλοι μου συμπατριώται,
Till when shall we be slaves	Δούλοι νά 'μεθα ώς πότε
Of the base Muslims	Των αχρείων Μουσουλμάνων,
The tyrants of Greece?	Της Ελλάδος των τυράννων;
The hour of vengeance	Εκδικήσεως η ώρα
Has arrived, o friends, now.	Έφθασεν, ω φίλοι, τώρα·
Our common fatherland [patria] calls	Η κοινή ΠΑΤΡΙΣ φωνάζει,
with our tears:	Με τα δάκρυα μας κράζει:
"My children, brave Greeks,	«Τέκνα μου, Γραικοί γενναίοι,
Hasten, men and also boys.	Δράμετ' άνδρες τε και νέοι·
Speak, so that all may hear	Κ' είπατε μεγαλοφώνως,
Speak as one, with hearts united	Είπατε τ' όλοι συμφώνως,
Embracing one another	Ασπαζόμεν' είς τον άλλον
All with great enthusiasm;	Μ' ενθουσιασμόν μεγάλον:
Until when this tyranny?	Έως πότ' η τυραννία;
LONG LIVE LIBERTY!	ΖΗΤΩ Η ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ»

In this poem, the emphasis is again markedly on the inherent injustice of the Turkish yoke because of their backwardness. This is coupled with overt allegiance to the West. The final stanza of the poem calls on the "Grecofrench" as one nation who are united in their brave opposition to tyranny. Over time, Korais made the argument before the French court that the Greeks deserved freedom precisely because the nature of the Greek was incommensurate with the backward influence that stems from Islam, whereas it was united in heart with the French enthusiasm for liberty. The argument was crucial for Korais's overture to France to support the Greek quest for independence. Whereas the denigration of the Muslim overlord and suppression of oriental elements in the Greek language and culture aligns with Korais's classicizing katharevousa project, this view was not unique to purists. As will be shown in the discussion of Psycharis's work below, supporters of the vernacular demotiki also espoused this argument.

Ioannis Psycharis

Ioannis Psycharis was born in 1854 as an Ottoman subject in Odessa to a well-off family

from Chios,[60] like Korais. After the loss of his mother at an early age, he moved to

Constantinople in 1860, where he remained until he turned 15. His native language was Russian,

and he learned French and Greek at the French Lycée Bonaparte. He moved to France in 1869,

first to Marseille, where he finished high school, and then to Paris to study literature at the

Sorbonne. He then briefly stayed in Germany for further study. He returned to Paris and studied

modern Greek literature and linguistics at the École des Hautes Études, where he became lecturer

of Greek literature and linguistics in 1884, with other positions following. Eventually in 1904 he

became Chair at the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes.

After nearly two decades in France, in 1886 Psycharis traveled back to Constantinople

and then for the first time to Greece, which had been recognized as an independent state in 1830.

These travels inform his most famous work, *To Taxidi Mou*,[61] (1888), a book ostensibly covering

his field work on Greek language use[62] from Paris to Constantinople and Chios to independent

Greece, Athens and Piraeus, with a not-so-subtle nod to Homer's *Odyssey*. Its two unifying

elements are his hypercritical response to words and linguistic forms he abhorred and his hatred

of the Turks. A deep-seated hatred of the Ottoman rule is embedded in this work. In this respect

it is akin to Korais's writings on the topic of Greek language and culture, albeit more than half a

century later and with an important difference: the language he employs advocates for the Greek

vernacular demotiki, in opposition to katharevousa, and is based on his own vernacular, which is

---

[60] The island of Chios was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912.
[61] First published in 1888.
[62] Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece*. Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 209.

still very artificial at its core. This might be explained as a natural result of his dwelling in Paris, in a way, a condition that Korais also shared.

Both Korais and Psycharis believed that a single, pure, standardized Greek language was essential for a unified Greece. Both also worked to develop Greeks' linguistic conscience in a way that eliminated what they considered to be false forms of Greek. But Psycharis was vehemently opposed to Korais. One of the main arguments that Psycharis puts forward is that the ancients themselves did not try to imitate their own predecessors, so "a true imitation of the ancients would consist in producing things modern, as the ancients themselves did." The pedant's attachment is to the form, to the grammar "in a petty, narrow way" and not to the antique thought, soul, nor genius. "Soul and language are one and the same thing. What really happens in Greece is the systematic adulteration of the native soul."[63]

Later on, Psycharis directly mentions Korais by name and says that "[Korais] came and galvanized the impoverished and half-dead [Scholastic Greek]. He restored to life the Purist prejudice which exists up to the present; he did in every respect the reverse of what Montaigne would have done. [Korais] was neither poet, artist, nor writer. He was only a philologist … Modern Greece is young still and does not yet know that to be a great scholar is not the same as to be a great writer." But Psycharis's most damning comment had to do with Korais's relation to the East: "Coray,[64] né à Smyrne, est oriental d'éducation. Paris ne l'a pas beaucoup changé" (Coray, born in Smyrna, is Oriental by education. Paris hasn't changed much). The comment

---

[63] J. N. Psichari. "The Literary Battle in Greece" *The Language Question in Greece*, edited and translated by "Chiensis," Calcutta, India, The Baptist Mission Press, 1902, pp. 27–48, p. 40. First published in the French journal *Revue de Paris* in Paris in March 1901.

[64] Korais was referred to as Coray in French.

completely identifies Korais with the East, while disregarding Korais's medical education in Montpellier.

Psycharis succinctly identifies how his views on language standardization diverged from Korais in the prologue to *To Taxidi Mou*: "those who fight and die for their homeland have a right to understand the language of their homeland."[65] Aspiring to be comprehensible did not mean impartial acceptance of every spoken idiom, however. Believing his form of modern Greek to be more authentic, he writes, "I have no language of my own and I did not create a language, for I am no maker. I write in the common language of the people; when our demotic language hasn't a word we need, I take the word from the ancient language and try, as much as possible, to match it to the grammar of the people"[66] Psycharis argues that the linguistic fight he is engaged is as important as an actual armed struggle: "since I can't be useful to [Greece] in the war, at least I fight for our national language. A nation, in order to become a nation, wants two things: to grow its borders and to have its own philology"[67] Moreover, he posits that a vernacular is necessary for growing mental boundaries to supplement growing physical borders.[68] But katharevousa is a roadblock for this linguistic self-actualization, Psycharis argues, that this alternative form of Greek is actually *foreign:*

> do not, do not, do not, do not ruin the language! You are destroying the ancient and the modern tongue alike. Do you want a language to resemble the ancient one in reality, to be the same language? Take the language of the people. Do you want a foreign language? Take katharévousa; it will show everyone that the ancient tongue has been truly lost. Do you want to play games? Do you want some fun, a joke, a good laugh? Then write katharévousa. Do you want science, hard graft and learning? Do you want to take on

---

[65] Ioannis Psycharis, *To Taxidi Mou*. Athens, Greece, Nefelis, 1988, p. 1.
[66] Psycharis, "My Journey" *Modernism: Representations of National Culture: Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945: Texts and Commentaries, volume III/2,* edited by Ersoy, Ahmet, et al. Translated by Mary Kitroeff. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010, pp. 251-9, p. 254.
[67] Psycharis, 1988, p. 2.
[68] Ibid.

some serious work? Then write in our national language. Your decision will show whether you are men or children.[69]

Another major element of his linguistic program concerns another foreign element. Towards the end of the prologue of *To Taxidi Mou*, Pscyharis makes this broad claim the starting point of his theory of language: "Truth is only the hatred every Greek feels for the Turk and the love he feels for his homeland and for the language his mother spoke to him as a child" (10). There's a strain in Pscyharis that exists also in Korais, that Turks' barbarity and their lack of civilizational progress (which is partly owed to their religion which impede their thinking, c.f. Korais's "Islamic darkness") necessitates their downfall and should ultimately result in their banishment from these lands to whence they came from:

> So long as this barbarian lives, he who dampens my spirits and won't let me sleep at night! I don't care who destroys him; so long as he is destroyed! At first they had their greatness; now they have been reduced to being the jesters of Europe. From the moment they set foot upon this soil, they brought their curse with them. The Turk does not progress; he slaughters and stands still; he drowns in the blood he sheds. His religion is his first enemy; it does not allow him to go forward and it trips his feet. Woe to the Greek who does not understand this! …. Let him then return to the red apple tree, since he can no longer rule the world. From where were they unleashed, from where did these barbarians come to Europe? Our soil does not bear them.[70]

For Psycharis, the co-habitation of Greeks and Turks as inherently problematic and in need of immediate rectification. The following passage concentrates on Greeks who lived beside Turks in Constantinople:

> [Constantinopolitan Greeks] live, as much as they can, fraternally with the Turks and try to govern them— or, in other words, to have a hold on them… For now, the Constantinopolitan quietly awaits for his master to fall on his own. He knows that the Greek, and only the Greek, will stay in the land forever and will never

---

[69] Psycharis, *To Taxidi Mou*, 1988, p. 12.
[70] Psycharis, "My Journey," 2010, p. 257.

budge from Constantinople. That is enough for him… They also cultivate letters; every now and then they learn a bit of Greek; they rejoice and preen because they think they know Greek.[71]

Psycharis takes umbrage with Constantinopolitan Greeks who have become too docile and suggests that in focusing too much on education that emphasizes ancient forms and higher registers such as katharevousa, they have become disconnected from the revolutionary fervor that instills independence. While about half of the book is devoted to his sojourn in Constantinople, the Constantinopolitan chapters have little about Greek language vis-à-vis Turkish language. Psycharis is more concerned about the *prevalence* of Turkish in Constantinople, the fact that it holds dominion over Greeks and that it is the language of the invader. A Turkish sign on a Byzantine church bothers him immensely, for example. There's a chapter with a Turkish title, «Καπιτάν μπουρντά γκελίορ» ["Kaptan Burada Geliyor," "the captain is coming here"[72]], which is a warning he received about an approaching Turkish captain on a boat trip on the Bosphorus, and a chapter about the dead Sultan Mahmud II, which involves an imaginary confrontation with the Sultan. In this latter chapter Psycharis declares that he represents Greece and also Europe—both rooted in ideals of civilization and freedom. With the aid of his brother and his godly powers, Psycharis drives the Turks to the Sea of Marmara, drowning them.

In the following chapters Psycharis moves on to Greece. In a conversation with locals about foreign words, he paradoxically takes a disinterested position in purifying the vernacular that has organically adopted Turkish loanwords over time. His reasoning for retaining Turkish words actually aligns with the irredentist political agenda of the Greek Megali Idea. He writes

---

[71] Ibid.

[72] Interestingly, while Psycharis doesn't note this, the grammar of this sentence is incorrect. The locative "burada" is erroneous, as it should have been the dative "buraya."

that "Taking the toufeki [rifle in Turkish] out of our language won't work because it is what kills the Turk; much wiser would be to take the Turk out of our islands and provinces because the Turk can kill Christians."[73] For Psycharis it is not necessary "to clean a language that needs no cleaning" but it is imperative to "clean the East,"[74] in contrast to the futile efforts of the katharevousa supporters, whose attempts at purifying an authentically grown language are stifling the Greek revolutionary spirit, causing miscommunication and blocking the path to national integration. Indeed, Psycharis deployed the language question as a political question, and imagined demotiki, with its organically evolving form and lexical variety, as a military force for the Greek state to win Ottoman territories.

To Taxidi Mou caused a huge uproar and, in Psycharis's own words, this work and its author came to be branded as an "antihellenic and antinational work by [the] Heresiarch." In an essay penned in French in the journal *Revue de Paris*, March 1901, he defends his work but also vehemently attacks his detractors. He argues that the pedant:

> … want to prove that Greece has not degenerated, that she has altered the language of her Gods, that she has not suffered from the contact of oriental peoples and, by their assertions, they do quite the contrary. *This contempt for the native tongue, this concoction of a language purely artificial, these prejudices, this affectation of nobility and reproach of vulgarity do not belong to the antique mind but to the oriental. … It is a well known fact that such a state of* diglossia *is common to all the East; the Chinese and the Arabs have two languages, nay two grammars, a written and a spoken one. … This is a turn of mind peculiar to the oriental, who loves to caress only the outline of things, without going into very marrow.* And the Greeks have not escaped from such a contamination. By a significant coincidence, the first vulgarists, Solomos and Valaority, come from the Ionian Islands, which were never subjugated to the Turks. … Even up to the present day, the first champions of new ideas have been brought up from their childhood in the freedom and the refined civilization of the West; Greece, on the contrary, when she thinks she is reverting to Xenophon, shows that she has not as yet released herself from the moral clasp of the Turk.[75]

---

[73] Psycharis, 1988, p. 256.
[74] Ibid., 255.
[75] Psichari, 1902, p. 37.

For Psycharis, the language question is intimately connected to national authenticity and national awakening, which he considers to be under attack by two related camps. On the side are those who would imitate the ancients and hold back revolutionary progress; on the other side are Turks who hold dominion over Greeks, even though they are backward in terms of civilizational advancement. As shown above, Psycharis seems to be disinterested in a few Turkish loanwords that might remain in vernacular Greek. His advocacy of demotiki was a battle to extinguish not Turkish loanwords but Greek diglossia. And the language battle was a political battle to end the Ottoman rule. His target was the Greek who had, in his view, internalized the Eastern "prejudices" and remained in "the moral clasp of the Turk" by embracing the artificial language of katharevousa.

Georgios Vizyenos

Compared to Korais and Psycharis, Georgios M. Vizyenos offers a very complicated treatment of Greek-Turkish co-existence and, importantly, the Greek language. It was a coexistence Vizyenos knew from his childhood. Vizyenos was born to a poor family in 1849 in a small town in Thrace between Adrianapolis/Edirne and Vizye in the Ottoman Empire (now in Turkey and named Vize)—a region that until 1914 was co-inhabited by Muslims and Greek-speaking Orthodox subjects. After losing his father to typhoid fever at the age of 5 and several of his siblings, he went to Constantinople to apprentice for a tailor in 1859. In 1867, a series of Greek patrons decided to sponsor his studies, beginning with preparation for the priesthood in Cyprus, which he abandoned in 1874. Afterwards he studied in Athens, then in Germany in Göttingen and Leipzig. At this point his life begins to resemble that of Korais, Psycharis, and

other Greek writers who were well-traveled in Europe. He completed his doctorate in pedagogy and psychology in Leipzig, then went for further study in London—where he is said to have composed most of his prose works—and also in Paris. He returned to Athens and for a decade he was unable to secure a teaching position at a university; but his perseverance led to his appointment as a Professor of Drama at the Athens Conservatory in 1890. Scholars have different accounts of his mental breakdown in 1892, which led him to spend his last four years in the Daphni mental hospital, where he died in 1896.

Vizyenos published poetry and fiction. He is best known for six short stories appearing in the 1880s. Five of them were published in 1883 and 1884 in the Athenian magazine *Estia*. His final, longer short story, "Moskov Selim," was published a year before his death in 1895 in the same magazine. It is unclear exactly when and where he wrote these stories. All but one is set in his native village and work through decades of personal, social and political history through a set of frame narratives. The storytelling utilizes katharevousa for the narration and a range of local vernaculars for the dialogue. This formula of diglossia is found in other realist and naturalist Greek fiction of the era—for a time it becomes the standard. The difference is that Vizyenos's frame narratives introduce a number or story tellers whose registers and dialects differ in nuanced ways from each other. The language in Vizyenos's stories registers the opposite of the purifying impulse found in both Korais's and Psycharis's treatises. Indeed, it is so additive, so extremely rich, so layered that its vocabulary can be compiled to function as a kind glossary of the ancient, Byzantine, katharevousa, demotiki, Thracian Greek, and Turkish dialects coexisting in that era.[76]

---

[76] Margaret Alexiou. "Why Vizyenos?" *Journal of Modern Greek Studies,* vol. 13, no. 2, 1995, pp. 289-298, p. 292.

It is this linguistic and narrative complexity that sets Vizyenos's works apart and also

render his works largely untranslatable in an important sense. I am thinking of Emily Apter's

invocation of "untranslatability as a deflationary gesture toward the expansionism and

gargantuan scale of world-literary endeavors."[77] The untranslatability of the writing in this sense

matches the "gargantuan scale" of the questions of compatibility, tolerance, pluralism and co-

existence put forth by the particular form of cosmopolitanism and multilingualism explored in

the stories. The works position the Greek language question within the Greek-Turkish question

and make it a viable alternative site for tracking the dissemination, nationalization, and purifying

impulses of modernity. My analysis of "Who Was My Brother's Murderer?" and "Moskov

Selim" suggests that Constantinople and the surrounding lands in Thrace, as the locus of the

Greek-Turkish enmity in the late-nineteenth century, when Vizyenos was writing, can function

not merely as the unstable periphery of a stable Europe but as a radically different and equally

valid example of how nation states and by extension national literatures are formed.

"Who Was My Brother's Murderer?"

"Who Was My Brother's Murderer?" is a detective story that begins in Constantinople,

quite possibly in 1881. The narrator, Yorgis, has recently came back from the "West" and along

with his mother and brother, Michailos, is staying at a European-style hotel on the Bosphorus.

The story is deceptively simple, about a mistaking of identities which leads to the murder of

Christakis, the narrator's brother, and the narrator's near apprehension of his brother's murderer.

The labor of reading goes into reconstructing the murder only to come to the conclusion that the

---

[77] Emily Apter. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York and London, Verso Book, 2014, p. 3.

question, "who was my brother's murderer," is impossible to answer even when the identity of the person who pulled the trigger is discovered.

The crime can be reconstructed, mystery style, just prior to closing scene, when the Greek Yorgis finds his mother caring unknowingly and lovingly for the Turk Kemal and decides not to tell her what he has discovered: that Kamil fired the shot that killed Christakis. The sequence of events is more or less as follows. Towards the end of Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, Christakis, the narrator Yorgis's brother, is duped by Charalambis into taking Charalambis's job as a postman. Christakis and Charalambis are said to uncannily resemble each other, Christakis does not know that Charalambis has ambushed two traveling Turkish salesman, Kamil and Kamil's fiancée's brother, on the bridge of Lulevurgaz and is afraid of retribution. Kamil's prospective brother-in-law gets killed in the ambush, whereas Kamil falls off the bridge and barely survives. He is found by Yorgis's mother, who takes him in and nurses him back to health. When Kamil returns to his fiancée, her father sends him away because Kamil was unable to protect his brother-in-law. Kamil vows revenge. Charalambis fears retribution and sets up Christakis, who innocently thinks that Charalambis is offering him the opportunity to take over the job of postman. Kamil thus inadvertently kills Charalambis's substitute, Christakis. Even before he learns of his victim Christakis's identity, the whole ordeal has taken a great toll on Kamil's mental health, and he joins a dervish lodge and became a *softa*. Three years after Christakis's death, Yorgis comes back from the "West" and meets with his surviving family members in Constantinople. Then they all go together to meet Kamil's mother and Kamil's brother, who is a detective and a member of the Young Ottomans movement. Yorgis's mother and Kamil's mother have been joined by their love for Kamil, but Yorgis and Kamil's brother share the mutual dislike of Muslims and Christians respectively, which has grown with the rise

53

of nationalism. For their mothers' sake, and for their lost brothers (the one dead and the other an opium user and half mad), they agree to work together to locate Christakis's killer. Kamil's family tell Yorgis's family that they will try to help them track down the killer to pay back the kindness Yorgis's mother has shown to Kamil. But their efforts prove to be futile. Towards the end of the investigation, Kamil turns up to tell Yorgis his life story, including the most recent episode, when he managed to put an end to what he thought was the vampire of his first victim, Christakis, but who was actually Charalambis, the double of Christakis and now once again the region's postman. Yorgis puts together all the disparate information he has heard from everyone, solves the case and tells Kamil that he is in fact Christakis's murderer. An officer leads Kamil away to be tried for the murder of Charalambis. Another three years pass, Yorgis returns from the West, now to his hometown, Vizye, for the first time since his childhood. There he finds Kamil, who had gone fully insane but has been declared a saint by the dervishes. Yorgis's mother, who does not know the truth, has taken him in again. Kamil is tending to Christakis's grave, which makes Yorgis's mother so happy and content that she wishes to keep him there. Yorgis decides never to tell his mother that Kamil shot Christakis. He wonders himself who the murderer is: Kamil, who did the deed, or Charalambis, who set the events in motion.

What makes the story special is not the murder mystery itself but the way the mystery is left unresolved in a way that ties the question of the murder in the title to questions of ethnic, national and religious forms of identity—forms of life that modernity is erasing—and different forms of language as a means of communication and misapprehension.

As plotted, the story starts with tension that's not immediately linked to Christakis's death. The hotel on the Bosporus employs a French valet, Louis, whose appearance and manners

have elicited contempt from Yorgis's "countrywoman" mother. She finds Louis's formal butler dress and his mannerisms repulsive and effeminate. Especially his constant bowing as a sign of deference has earned him the nickname "wagtail." This Western mode of dress and etiquette are of course the ones that Yorgis has adopted himself, and it is clear that Yorgis's mother's constant bashing of Louis throughout the story also has some bearing on Yorgis too. Yorgis is stuck between what he has learned abroad and what he learned before he left. At times, his rational, foreign-educated ways are, for his mother, tantamount to cowardice. When he fails to act according to his mother's expectations, he is met with indirect forms of belittlement. For example, upon seeing Yorgis's reluctance to find the killer, she proclaims, "If I didn't have [a] son I'd cut off my hair, put on men's clothes and track down the murderer, with my rifle over my shoulder, till I avenged the murder."[78]

Yorgis constantly tries to make sense of his surroundings through his educated lens, whether he is trying to understand his mother's love for Kemal or even the most simple of sentiments. He even has to "translate" his own mother, both because she is an uneducated person influenced by Eastern superstitions, and because her speech, which is a lower register, is additionally corrupted by Turkish, as opposed to the high register Greek of independent Greek state. The narrator himself, having shed these markers, can only reorient himself according to the educated norms; but he is forced to translate himself back to a language that his mother can understand:

> By "vengeance" she meant justice, but she could not conceive of this justice meted out by the impassive hand of the law alone, without her personal satisfaction …. The cold arguments of erudition, with which I sometimes sought to calm the impulses of her fervent heart, evaporated before they could reach their goal,

[78] Georgios Vizyenos. "Who was my Brother's Murderer?" *Thracian Tales*, edited and translated by Peter Mackridge, Athens, Aiora Press, 2014, pp. 87-140, p. 97.

> like tiny drops of water falling in an intensely burning furnace …. After a lengthy sermon on the place of the individual in relation to the laws of the state, I promised her that I would move heaven and earth to bring the culprit to justice.[79]

Yorgis's voice, in katharevousa, is working through his mother's vernacular vocabulary, including words in regional Ottoman Greek and Turkish dialect, draws attention to the linguistic dimension of the struggle. Yorgis's katharevousa brings attention to itself in this piece of writing as a social practice alongside demotiki. It represents the long distance he has traveled away from his place of origins. It participates in an ultimately failed struggle to communicate to Yorgis's mother a Western-informed world view through "cold arguments of erudition" and "learned sermon[s]." It signifies the division of self that is made evident to him with his arrival in the Ottoman capital. In addition, the traces of him communicating with Turks in Turkish are hidden and effaced, bringing in yet another layer translational complexity.

This constant negotiation between his multiple selves is at the heart of the story. The story itself takes hybrid forms that relate repeatedly renegotiated processes and failures in communication, recognition and understanding. Yorgis's and Kamil's families believe in a combination of religion and superstition. The two mothers share a keen interest in fortune telling, for example, though they fail to interpret the signs fully to unlock the "truth." Yorgis himself is divided. He is broadly dismissive of religious and superstitious thinking and the signs it produces, and therefore doesn't take them into account himself. Thus he misses important clues in the fortune-telling event that might have saved Kamil from the second murder and his loss of sanity. At the same time, he proclaims that "learned and wise as I was, I hadn't become an infidel idolater, but believed with all my heart in—fairy-tales!"[80] But the signs that superstition

---

[79] Ibid., p. 98.
[80] Ibid., p. 112.

produces are re-affirmed at every turn and on a meta-level work as devices of foreshadowing. The readers of the story are thus able to piece together the clues much earlier than any of the characters in the story. It is only through an accumulation of these kinds of instances of misreading that the truth is attained.

As the story progresses and as members of both families become more and more enmeshed, the lines that demarcate them, one Greek and one Turkish, also start to blur: Kamil has been transformed by the time he spent with Yorgis's family and now, according to Yorgis's mother, "he's such a good boy. He eats Christian funeral cakes and drinks holy water and kisses the priest's hand—anything to get cured."[81] The failures in communication, recognition and understanding are amplified by the constant doubling of characters, relations, and events. Yorgis's mother calls Kamil "my son," and Kamil calls her "*valide*" [mother]. Here the narrator doesn't make it clear whether his mother calls Kamil "son" in Greek; but he chooses to emphasize Kamil's foreignness and outsider status by having him use the Turkish word for mother, thus hinting at his own repulsion at this arrangement. Even Yorgis, who professes a deep-seated resentment towards the Turks, when he hears that his mother "has been a nurse to Turks" and "frown[s] with indignation,"[82] is touched by the willingness of Kamil's family to help: "The eagerness of them both caused indescribable pleasure not only to my mother but also to my brother and even myself, as I realized how that beneficence towards people of another faith had not been in vain."[83]

---

[81] Ibid., p. 106.
[82] Ibid., p. 100.
[83] Ibid., p. 107.

In "Who was my Brother's Murderer," form and content mirror each other through Vizyenos's representation of language itself. While misrecognition results in the brother's death and thus creates the mystery, the story is propelled forward by a series of miscommunications. While the perpetrator turns out be an Ottoman Turk, the series of miscommunications are not the result of a linguistic or a translational problem; the Greek characters seem to be able to communicate perfectly in Turkish, and other than the narrator, have no qualms about it. The ending is ambivalent in the sense that it can be argued that Kamil is like a cuckoo, a parasite that not only kills the son but also supplants him; but there's also enough textual evidence to suggest strange forms of co-existence might be preferable to familiar forms relationships that are based along the lines of kinship, ethnicity, religion and language as the actual criminal Charalambis, who instigated the conditions for the murder, is also an Ottoman Greek.

Moskov Selim (1895)

"Moskov Selim" tells the story of a Russophile Ottoman-Turkish man named Selim and is set in late 19th century. Selim lives on the outskirts of the town V. (for all intents and purposes Vizye, where "Who Was My Brother's Murderer" also takes place) in isolation while wishing that the Russians would come and invade his country so that he can live with them instead. In this story, Vizyenos presents the divided loyalties of Greeks and Turks through a representation of a divided self along the axes of gender, politics, and religion. The language of the story is again crucial. Most of the story consists of a series of conversations, and while not openly acknowledged, these conversations are understood to be happening in Turkish. It's clear that Vizyenos doesn't consider Turkish a language that belongs to *him*; but the sense of begrudgement towards Turkish that is visible in "Who Was My Brother's Murderer" is absent. It

is the richest in all of Vizyenos's stories in the number of Turkish words used conversationally and with reference to a wide range of things.[84]

In contrast to "Who Was My Brother's Murderer," "Moskov Selim" has fewer characters. Furthermore, while "Who Was My Brother's Murderer" is heavily predicated on solving a crime and uncovering the perpetrator, "Moskov Selim" is less a mystery than a set of reflections on questions of identity raised through the documenting of Moskov Selim's strange biography. It is another frame narrative, but the temporal aspects of Moskov Selim are simpler, as the storytelling turns back the clock only once for Moskov Selim's story to unfolds chronologically. The difficulty, as it is presented, is representational: how to accurately, ethically portray a conversation with a strange Turk in Turkish framed in Greek and filtered through an ambivalent Greek narrator who at the onset is questioning his own national loyalties? The story consists of three main frames: a short introduction that prefaces the story; the narrator's frame which involves the immediate events that led up to his meeting Selim and, at the close of the story, seeing Selim to his end; and Selim's account of his life given to the narrator, which takes up the bulk of the story. There are additional frames within Selim's frame, perspectives of minor characters who fill Selim in on important details that he has missed.

The short introductory frame, while only three paragraphs long, is crucial for setting the tone and moral ambiguities of the story: the narrator professes regret about meeting the "good, strange Turk" who has "filled [the narrator's] heart with sorrow, as if the grief caused every single day by the fate of [his] compatriots were not enough."[85] The narrator proclaims, "I need to

---

[84] This remark is by the translator William F. Wyatt, Jr. in Georgios Vizyenos. *My Mother's Sin and Other Stories*. Translated by William F. Wyatt, Jr., Published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England, 1988, p. 185.

[85] Georgios Vizyenos. *Moskov Selim*. Translated by Peter Mackridge, Athens, Greece, Aiōra, 2015, p. 23.

write your story" even though "I have no doubt that the fanatics among your people will revile the memory of one of the faithful for opening the innermost recesses of his heart to the profane eyes of an infidel," and also "I fear too that the fanatics among my own people may find fault with a Greek writer for not concealing your virtues, or else for not replacing you by a Christian hero in your narrative [αφηγήσει σου]."[86] But the ending of the story and the way the resolution is framed end up directly contradicting this introductory frame.

The story establishes its reliability by this sense of trepidation on the side of the narrator. The reluctant hero/narrator does not exhibit this reluctance merely because of storytelling conventions but also because of how it will be received by *certain* people: he disarms both Greek and Turkish nationalist critics (fanatics as they are called) preemptively while also claiming that "his conscience will never be troubled because" he "valued in [Selim] not the implacable enemy of my nation, but simply the man."[87] This outermost, introductory frame is what makes the story possible: the narrator articulates his sensibilities and affirms his loyalties; but by choosing to tell this particular story as a truth-claim, he ensures that the readers will be challenged to put their actual political loyalties aside.

In the second frame, this strategy is re-deployed. Just when the narrator is about to hear Selim's story, he announces that his interest is piqued precisely because, whereas Moskov-Selim as a Turk "belonged, that is, to a nation whose particular characteristic is a profound contempt for whatever is inconsistent with their religion and traditions, a fanatical attachment especially to those superstitions which serve their national pride and egotism, and above all a stoically

---

[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 23-24.

impassive acceptance of the vicissitudes of fate in both national and personal affairs,"[88] Selim is defined in contradistinction to this definition. Yet throughout the story Selim would exhibit these qualities, and the accumulation of his Turkish qualities culminates in the ending.

The narrator justifies his willingness to hear Selim's story as "it would therefore be interesting, from many points of view, to hear the reasons for Selim's renunciation and rejection of his national character."[89] In the second frame, Selim is introduced to the narrator as someone who is reviled by his own compatriots for being crazy. His craziness does not stem from his living arrangements, which the narrator finds "so sensible,"[90] but from him being "crazy about Russians."[91] This crazy love for the hereditary enemy of the Ottoman Empire is reflected in the design of his house, his household objects, and his way of dressing. His interest in all-things-Russian was first met with contempt by the townspeople; but later on they have decided that he was "weak-minded"[92] and so he and his Russophilia have become a source of amusement and ridicule rather than deep reflection.

In the third and main frame, Selim chooses to tell his story in a way that resembles a talking cure. He says that he needs to unburden himself by talking to someone. Curiously, the starting point of his story about how he came to be a Russophile is his childhood and how he was reared. From this point, the talk is chronologically straightforward, with some large time lapses. Indeed, the narration is fragmented, and there are incredibly important details missing.

---

[88] Ibid., p. 38.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., p. 13.

The story concerns the series of unfortunate events that afflicted his life. When Selim was 18 years of age, his eldest brother Hasan was recruited to the army. But Hasan, while he had his father's fierce, cruel countenance, had a temperament of his own: mild and gentle at heart, Selim believed. Selim was repulsed by the prospect of Hasan partaking in "the beating, the killing, the thieving and the debauchery [which the conscripts and their officers] were planning" since "[t]he Sultanate had given [them] eight days' grace to enjoy themselves as they pleased before joining the army."[93] Hasan's commander tells Hasan, "[i]f you've had your eye on any beautiful Greek girl or you're holding a grudge against any of the infidels, come on: now is your chance to vent your frustration."[94] Hasan flees the army. When Selim learns about his brother's desertion, he convinces Hasan's superior officers to take him in Hasan's stead, believing that would protect Hasan and would also appease their father. Thus, Selim joins the army and is immediately sent off to fight against the Russian Empire in the Crimean War. He is wounded and hospitalized in the Battle of Silistra (1854).

After having served for seven years (1861), Selim returns home, completely destitute. When he finally reaches his home, he learns that his mother has died, the estate fallen into ruin, and that his father has become an alcoholic and taken up residence in the harem some years before. Selim marries over the years, and Selim and his wife, Meleyka (his mother's Circassian handmaiden), have three children. But he enlists again in 1875, after hearing about the revolts in Herzegovina, Serbia and Bulgaria but more importantly when he learns that Russians are also making preparations to join the war. In the battle of Plevna (1877), Selim is wounded again and later taken prisoner in Russia. Then the Russian doctor and nurses show "humanitarian

---

[93] Ibid., p. 30.
[94] Ibid., p. 33.

compassion"[95] on him. Their collective praise for Selim, based on Selim's extensive war wounds, result in a sea-change. This kindness, the first he has received since he was separated from his mother, alters Selim's outlook. Selim had been up until that point "blinded by fanaticism against the Russians, he had imagined them to be cruel, bloodthirsty and ready to tear his raw flesh apart like savage beasts."[96] Whenever he found a Russian soldier "helplessly wounded," he would say, "'the arch-enemy of our nation, damn him!'" and "finish him off with ferocious glee."[97] But his time in Russia radically changes him. It is important to note that he is not professing a simple, peaceful Russian and Ottoman co-existence. He wishes that Russians actually would invade the Ottoman Empire, and he dreams of becoming a Russian subject.

> God's world is large … and if the poor Tsar has difficulty in accommodating his subjects, let them come to our country—they are such good people. What would it cost the Sultan? He enjoys himself in Constantinople, so why can't he enjoy himself in Baghdad or Damascus? Can't we live with our brothers the Russians? *Bratushka! Bratushka!*[98]

Here Selim is re-articulating, via a clever misdirection, the Megali Idea: the Greek irredentist idea to expand the Greek state by taking Ottoman lands as far as Constantinople and Western Asia Minor. Going back to the initial frame, "replacing [Selim] by a Christian hero in [Selim's] narrative"[99] turns out to be a misdirection itself: the story is precisely predicated on an Ottoman-Muslim declaring anti-Ottoman and anti-Islamic sentiments. "God had removed pity from Islam!"[100] Selim proclaims in one instance. While describing his conditions in Constantinople after Russia, he is appalled by the fact that "after so many battles and so many heroic deeds, the Sultan's soldiers were reduced to taking alms from the Jews, while the delicate effendis walked

---

[95] Ibid., p. 35.
[96] Ibid., p. 36.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., p. 40.
[99] Ibid., p. 2.
[100] Ibid., p. 40.

past with their silk umbrellas and their gloves, pretending not to notice [them]."[101] Selim

justifies his pro-Russian stance by saying that "God has taken away his pity from this country

because of the evildoings of the effendis and the *agas*, and he has made our land the *kismet* of

Russia because of her benevolence and good sense."[102]

The narrator gives Selim the understanding and the recognition that Selim desperately

needs. The talking cure performs its therapeutic work, and Selim is appeased. When Selim

finishes his story, he asks the narrator to let him know "when you read in the papers that the

Russians are coming again."[103] He says, "I'll sprout wings, I assure you, so as to go and join

them."[104] The narrator tells Selim that he will be going to Constantinople for one or two months

and will visit Selim when he returns and tell Selim "what to expect" that Winter.[105]

On his way to Constantinople, the narrator reflects on Selim's predicament. He believes

that Selim has "inherited … a wonderful liveliness of imagination" from his "mild and peaceable

mother," which in turn has made it possible for Selim to create a "Russian life for himself in that

Greek land" [emphasis added].[106] But this also opens the door to the possibility that Selim's

neighboring tormentors might be Greek. The narrator finds it evident that "nationalism and

religious fanaticism had not been expunged without trace from the consciousness of one born to

such parents but had rather been transformed into diametrically opposite convictions."[107]

---

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., p. 41.
[103] Ibid., p. 70.
[104] Ibid., p. 71.
[105] Ibid., p. 72.
[106] Ibid., p. 80.
[107] Ibid., p. 90.

Furthermore, the narrator considers Selim's views on the caliphate relocating from Constantinople to Baghdad or Damascus:

> I have often heard it said by our people that the Turks never considered the European possessions of the Ottoman state as truly belonging to them. On the contrary, they believe and profess that their natural homeland is the "Red-Apple-Tree" and that, when the time comes, they will all take their women and children and will quietly and placidly cross the Bosporus, devoutly returning the keys of Byzantium to us as a sacred pledge…Ever since the iron hand of the Greek revolution had shaken the Sultan's European empire, breaches had appeared in it that could no longer be dammed or repaired even with the copious blood or the innumerable bodies willingly supplied for this purpose by the faithful. … Is it to be wondered, then, that a man such as Moskov Selim should feel that the fated hour has now come when the Caliph must transfer his throne to Damascus or Baghdad?[108]

The story ends abruptly with the death of Selim. As a cruel jest by the townspeople, Selim was fed false information about an impending Russian invasion which caused him to have a stroke, "obviously brought on by his great joy"[109] and rendered him bedridden. The narrator finds Selim on his death bed but in a confused and agitated state. Ostensibly, it was not joy but sorrow that caused the stroke. Selim says that his parents were Muslims, and he, along with all the Ottomans, is the Sultan's property. "Can a leopard change its spots? How can I deny my own blood? Betray my master? Join the Russians?"[110] Selim asks the questions in quick succession, alluding to Jeremiah 13:23. The false-fulfillment of his deepest wish has fractured him. This time the narrator lies to Selim and tells him "that no Russian has entered, or will enter, the Sultan's domains"[111] Selim is overjoyed, but this exertion is too much for him. The narrator "distinctly" hears "the exclamation 'Allah! Allah!' "[112] and Selim expires. "Ο Τούρκος έμεινε Τούρκος" [the Turk remained a Turk] is the final remark by the narrator. Here, at the end of the story, all the

---

[108] Ibid., p. 91.
[109] Ibid., p. 92.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., p. 93.
[112] Ibid., p. 94.

frames collapse onto each other, and this implosion negates the multifacetedness of Selim's

identity, and by extension, the narrative itself. However, it can be argued that the Turk didn't

remain a Turk in the end, considering Selim's wish of "sprouting wings … so as to go and join

[the Russians]."[113]

In his narratives, Vizyenos not only complicates Greek and Turkish co-existence in the

late Ottoman Empire but deconstructs the Greek-Turkish binary opposition that supports

nationalist consciousness and, with this, the emerging Greek and Turkish nationalist identities

themselves and their language practices. Vizyenos presents a form of co-existence, a form of

cosmopolitanism that is grounded in social reality. Usually, when the term cosmopolitanism is

invoked to describe an actual space, it is used to refer to a specific community and/or

communities with multiple–sometimes competing and sometimes multi-layered–local

allegiances, obligations, and loyalties. In this sense, it seems that when used to describe a

particular historical space, cosmopolitanism is being mistakenly used for conditions of

heterogeneity and ethno-masquerade and does not mean much more than (possibly peaceful but

also precarious) segregated co-existence of different linguistic, religious, ethnic communities

rather than a well-integrated pluralistic society. Thus, it is not clear how a genuinely

cosmopolitan space would and should work and also whether it would be a desirable condition

for all the parties dwelling in it. How can there be a peaceful, harmonious space where members

of different communities live together but have no affinities, no sense of belonging, and do not

feel a particular responsibility and local allegiances to each other? Vizyenos's alternative seems

to be predicated on a somewhat sentimental sense of humanism, especially as it relates to the

---

[113] Ibid., p. 71.

common folk, who don't seem to concern themselves with strict, unshakeable adherence to religion, ethnicity, and language. Vizyenos's linguistic allegiances mirror this. While deftly effacing the prevalence of Turkish in these two stories and crisscrossing different registers of modern Greek in multiple narrative frameworks, Vizyenos offers a complicated insight into nationalism and cosmopolitanism at the end of the 19th century. It is precisely this clash of interests that is brewing in Vizyenos's narratives. In this sense, he offers a fantastically different vantage point on the underpinnings of the so-called cosmopolitan order of the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, he subverts the dichotomy of Greeks versus Turks that undergirds the monolingual projects of people such as Korais and Psycharis. His stories show that it is indeed possible for Greeks and Turks, and Greek and Turkish to co-exist, while at the same time they depict a kind of co-existence that is mired with pitfalls of miscommunication with disastrous results.

Chapter 2:

The Translation of the Qur'an

In 1925, two years after the formation of the Turkish Republic and four years after his poem was adopted by the parliament as the Turkish National Anthem during the Turkish War of Independence, Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy) was tasked with the translation of the Qur'an by the Turkish State. On October 26th, 1925 Âkif signed a contract with the Turkish State; shortly thereafter he left Turkey for a self-imposed exile in Egypt along with other Muslim conservatives who were dissatisfied with the country's direction, where he finished the translation in 1928 and began working on revisions. But as the Turkish Republic implemented a successive series of reforms, which transformed the republic into a secular state without an official religion, Âkif began to have serious doubts about turning in his translation. Ultimately, in 1931 Âkif decided to not share his translation with the Turkish state, fearing that it would be used in prayer, which would go against his own religious beliefs and those of most other Muslim theologians. Âkif ultimately reneged on his contract in 1932.

In 1936, in failing health, Âkif decided to go to Istanbul for medical treatment. Before he left Egypt, he entrusted the manuscript with a close friend, Yozgatlı İhsan Efendi, in the hopes of returning to Egypt after his treatment, and then revising and publishing the translation; Âkif gave İhsan Efendi instructions to burn the manuscript if he should not return and died shortly thereafter in Istanbul. İhsan Efendi closely guarded the manuscript after Âkif's passing; he rebuffed the incessant advances of the Turkish state and was unfazed by Âkif's family's threats

of legal action. After İhsan Efendi's death in 1961, and in the aftermath of the 1960 Turkish coup d'état,[114] Âkif's translation was burned in Egypt by a group of people, including İhsan Efendi's son and the son of the last Sheikh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire. This burned manuscript became a much-referred symbol of Turkey's religious conservative resistance to Turkish secularism and was much lamented only 50 years later, in the 2010s, parts of the manuscript re-surfaced. While its existence was known to some Islamist conservatives, the existence of the extant manuscript was only disclosed when they decided to publish it, on the grounds that the current political in Turkey wouldn't allow a misappropriation of Âkif's manuscript, i.e. for state-imposed forms of religious worship.

Âkif's reticence about this translation encapsulates the turbulent years concerning religious reforms following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Immediately after the Republic was founded in 1923, the nascent Turkish state instituted a succession of reforms: the abolishment of the caliphate and the shuttering of religious schools in 1924, the alphabet reform of 1928, and the language reform of 1932, among many others. Following unsuccessful, and at times scandalous attempts at translating the Quran in the very early years of the Republic, the state tasked several people with creating a standardized translation of the Quran. A Turkish translation of *adhan* (the Islamic call to prayer) was also adopted; recitation of *adhan* in its Arabic original then became illegal in 1932, the same year that language reforms were announced. In this translated version of *adhan* many words deemed to be sacred for

---

[114] The 1960 coup was the first major intervention into politics by the Turkish army to curb what they saw as the rising influence of Islamic reactionary movements. These interventions mirrored the reforms of the Early Republican Era, in the sense that, they were presented at necessary course correcting, modernizing reforms, that were similarly and also had violent repercussions. Furthermore, the periodic reoccurence of these interventions (which continued until the early 2000s) fractured the society, and instilled a deep seated of secularism in conservative Islamists. For an analysis of the 1960 coup in a different context see Kristin Dickinson. "Zafer Şenocak's "Turkish Turn": Acts of Crosslinguistic Remembrance in Köşk (The Pavilion)." *New German Critique,* vol. 45, no. 134, 2017: pp. 179–200.

Muslims were replaced with their pre-modern, pagan/shamanistic Turkish counterparts. For example, the Arabic word "Allah" was replaced with the Turkish "*Tanrı*," the history of which is intertwined with pre-Islamic Turkish shamanistic religions, possibly the oldest extant Turkish word, recorded in a Chinese source in 4th century BCE. The Qur'anic translation project was sanctioned by the state, overturning the late Ottoman Era ban during Abdulhamit II's reign. Moreover, resistance to its goal as the implementation as the official form of worship was criminalized.

This chapter focuses on the dynamics amongst language, translation regimes, and religion through a systematic analysis of the responses to the attempts to create an Islamic worship in the Turkish language and their connection to the Turkish alphabet and language reforms in the early Turkish Republic (1920s-1940s). Based on the idea that secularism in the early Republican Era, as the example of the Qur'an translation project shows, was about repressing, subsuming, and profaning religion rather than a separation of religion and politics, this chapter takes the varied responses and reactions from the right as its case study. The case study for this chapter focuses specifically on Muslim conservatives who were opposed to the language reforms and the translation of the Qur'an and as a result were marginalized. Even though Muslim conservatives were not a persecuted group in the sense that they didn't face state violence in the same way Armenians and Greeks did, they were still disenfranchised by these new measures and policies. Within this context, I analyze the importance of someone like Âkif being tasked with the project of translating the Qur'an. Âkif constitutes an interesting choice as his religious and political positions were very well-known. As a devoutly religious person, Âkif feared that his translation would be utilized by the state in the service of its secularization project. To this end, he resisted state policies by holding back his translation

from the Kemalist regime. Yet the intrinsic literary quality of his translation complicates this narrative of resistance. As this chapter will show, in terms of language use and literary expression, Âkif was not fully misaligned with the Turkish sate. Due to his background as a somewhat modernist literary writer who was very knowledgeable about European literature, Âkif didn't strictly adhere to the metric rules of Ottoman poetry. His tendency toward colloquialisms and vernacular speech further distinguished him from academic and theological scholars whose subsequent Qur'an translations completely disregarded the vernacularization and purification efforts of the early modern republic. While Âkif remained a pious, conservative Muslim until the end of his life, he did not fundamentally disagree with the vernacularization and simplification of the Turkish language. This is significant, as language reforms—and especially script reform—were clearly part of a secularizing and westernizing agenda.

Scholarship to date has documented how Turkish language reforms, under the guise of standardizing and regulating the language, simultaneously repressed the use of non-Turkish indigenous languages among its citizens (this argument can also be expanded toward non-Turkish speaking Muslims such as Kurds). One aspect that has been overlooked in this scholarship is the role played by conservatives such as Âkif, who was vehemently against the effacement of Ottoman cultural heritage but was seemingly content with the establishment of a vernacularized form of Turkish as the sole language of the modern republic. In this chapter, I argue that a figure such as Âkif is complicit in the rise of ethno-nationalism; while Akif took umbrage with the purification of Perso-Arabic elements from the Turkish language, in this limited form of criticism he failed to fully address the essential nationalist ideology underscoring the history of Turkish language reform and its assertion of a monolingual nation state in the early

republican era. He did not take issue, for example, with the series of physical and symbolic forms of violence that was inflicted on non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. While an outspoken critic when he wanted to be, Âkif simply never wrote anything against the Ottoman Empire or the Turkish Republic when it came to violence targeting non-Muslims. As such, we must view Âkif as at least partly nationalist in his embrace of an ethnocentric take on language, even if this contradicts his political orientation as conservative Islamist against secularization. Through the figure of Âkif, this chapter thus shows the uneasy alliances that formed between Islamists, political conservatives and Kemalists around the question of language reform and the broader "Turkification" of the populace.

My emphasis on Âkif in this chapter opens up space for future studies to examine other authors of the time period who either completely eliminated the multicultural, multicommunal, multilingual, and multireligious facets of the Ottoman Empire from their works or relegated them to the margins. In the work of Âkif and his contemporaries from both sides of the political aisle, including writers with conservative leanings such as Peyami Safa, Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, as well Kemalist and non-Kemalist modernist authors such as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca, and Nurullah Ataç, all portray a Turkey that's mostly devoid of non-Muslims, and make no note of what has happened to the Ottoman non-Muslims. Only a few writers, mostly with socialist leanings, such as Nâzım Hikmet, Sait Faik Abasıyanık, and İbrahim Kaypakkaya, are cognizant, or brave enough, to mention the violence against non-Muslims. That is to say, while some people were discontent with the effacement of Ottoman history, tradition, and language, they were in agreement about the transformation of the ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse Ottoman society into a monolithic Turkish one.

Historical context

At the time of the Turkish Republic's establishment the numbers of various non-Muslim populations had dwindled considerably compared to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire incurred huge territorial losses during the Balkan Wars and WWI. But more importantly, the Armenian Genocide and the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange meant that incredibly high numbers of non-Muslims were killed and banished. Additionally, many non-Muslim survivors opted to leave the country, triggering mass waves of immigration precipitated by the Ottoman and Turkish states' discriminatory policies. Yet, the Turkish state's main goal wasn't about a religious conversion and assimilation of the remaining non-Muslim communities. The state's main goal was rather to curb the influence of Islam as a marker of identity and belonging and instead to offer one that was grounded in national consciousness, which was deemed as an essential characteristic of Western states and thus needed to be adopted. This created a paradoxical condition: for a complete reorientation of the society in the image of an "Enlightened," "civilized," and "modern" western state, the republic had to resort to authoritarian measures, such that in the end it did not resemble a state infused with Enlightenment values, but rather a totalitarian and a fascist one.

How, exactly, did language reform fit into the subsumption of Islam under nationalism? As I show in the following sections, language reform in the early republic was central to both the development of a national Turkish identity and the establishment of a secular nation-state. Radical language reforms of the 1920s and 1930s built on long-standing debates concerning vernacularization and standardization of Turkish in the Ottoman Empire and beyond, which date to the mid 19th century. These discussions began to crystalize in the 1910s around three main camps: 1) the reactionaries espoused going back to an older, "golden" version of Ottoman

Turkish, 2) the conservatives defended a middle-way by standardizing the language but keeping the extant vocabulary and some syntax from Arabic and Persian so as to preserve continuity, and 3) the purificationists espoused a radical form of vernacularization and promulgated "cleaning" Turkish from eastern influences by either creating new words through the use of Turkish stems and philological methods or by borrowing words from European languages to fill the gaps so as to better reorient Turkey as a European state.

Most of the supporters of radical vernacularization were members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP); this branch would later be adopted by the Republic of Turkey in the 1930s. Arguably the most influential supporter of this idea was Ziya Gökalp. As supporters of vernacularization became stronger with the rise of the CUP, there were many publications (most importantly the periodical *Genç Kalemler*) and intellectuals such as Ömer Seyfeddin that espoused the virtues of a national language purified of foreign loanwords. Ziya Gökalp published such a poem in 1916 in the *Tanin* newspaper as *Türke göre Lisan*, [*Language according to the Turk*]. Its title later became simply *Lisan* [*Language*].

…	…
Türkçesini almalı.	Pick the Turkish ones.
Yeni sözler gerekse,	If new words are required,
…	…
Yap yaşayan Türkçeden,	Create them from living Turkish,
…	…
Birkaç dil yok Tûran'da,	There are not several languages in Turan,
Tek dilli bir kümeyiz.	We're a circle with a single tongue.
…	…
Türklüğün vicdânı bir,	Turkism's conscience is one,
Dîni bir, vatanı bir;	Its religion is one, its homeland is one;
Fakat hepsi ayrılır	But they will all separate

Olmazsa lisânı bir.   If its language isn't one.[115]

What sets apart this poem is not its aesthetic accomplishments, but its decidedly nationalist stance. Gökalp emphasizes that without a national language, it would be impossible to maintain religious and national unity. In this poem, Gökalp outlines the program for a new, national Turkish and espouses the values of a program of language purification that would come to fruition 16 years later. In other parts of the poem Gökalp emphasizes the importance of linguistic purity and legibility and of not resorting to Arabic and Persian for coining new words. The final lines of the poem reiterate his belief that Turkish unity in all its aspects is predicated upon the singular existence of a pure, modern Turkish language uncoupled from foreign elements.

Gökalp expanded upon these ideas in considerable length in his book *Principles of Turkism*, published in 1923. In this incredibly influential book for Turkish nationalism, Gökalp devotes an entire section to the language question. In the very beginning of this section, "The Language of Turkism" [*Lisanî Türkçülük*], in the subsection titled "language of speech and language of writing "[*konuşma dili ve yazı dili*] he recognizes a *diglossia*, he argues that Turkey's national language is Istanbul Turkish, but that in Istanbul, there are two Turkish [languages]: one is the spoken but not written "Istanbul dialect," [*İstanbul lehçesi*] the other is the written but not spoken "Ottoman language" [*Osmanlı lisanı*] He asks, "which one of them is going to become our national language?" [*Acaba, millî lisanımız bunlardan hangisi olacaktır?*].[116] Gökalp erroneously believed that in civilized countries the spoken and the written form were one and the same, and that this duality was a unique case for "Istanbul." He describes this duality as a "malady of language" that needed to be cured and rectified. He calls the written language

---

[115] Ziya Gökalp. "Lisan." *Yeni Hayat: Şiirler*, edited by Salim Çonoğlu, Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2015, p. 38.
[116] Ziya Gökalp. *Türkçülüğün Esasları.* Edited by Mehmet Kaplan. Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1976, p. 105.

artificial, similar to Esperanto. This "Ottoman Esperanto," in Gökalp's words, was an amalgamation of Arabic, Persian and Turkish which could therefore never serve as a vernacular and/or achieve the conditions for national unity:

> Millet, lisanca, dince, ahlâkça ve bediiyatça müşterek olan, yani aynı terbiyeyi almış fertlerden mürekkep bulunan bir zümredir … Şu hâlde (Türküm) diyen her ferdi …. Türk tanımaktan başka çare yoktur.[117]

> A nation is unitary in terms of *language*, religion, [aesthetic] taste, and morality, that is to say it is a community comprised of persons who were in the same conditions. Therefore, there is no other way to recognize a person, who says that they are a Turk, as a Turk.

Towards the end of this section on language in *Principles of Turkism*, Gökalp lays down his program. He posits three stages necessary for a national language: purification of foreign elements, cultivation of hitherto unknown words and forms of expression, and adding necessary new international words. "To incorporate our national language," he argues, "we should discard Ottoman as if it never existed," adopt the vernacular, and "write the way Istanbul ladies speak" Turkish. He argues that most Arabic and Persian words should be purged and only the ones that have already become mainstays should remain. These ideas essentially laid the groundwork for the Turkish Language Reform. Gökalp went even further, as he believed that such a modern, vernacular Turkish should permeate *all* aspects of life. Writing in 1918, Gökalp argued in his poem *Vatan* that:

[Imagine] A country where the *adhan* is recited in Turkish in its mosques.	Bir ülke ki camiinde Türkçe ezan okunur.
The villager understands the meaning of the prayer…	Köylü anlar manasını namazdaki duanın...
[Imagine] A country where a Turkish Qur'an is read in its schools.	Bir ülke ki mektebinde Türkçe Kur'an okunur.
People from all ages know the command of God…	Küçük büyük herkes bilir buyruğunu Huda'nın …
O son of Turk, your homeland is there!	Ey Türk oğlu işte senin orasıdır vatanın![118]

---

[117] Ibid., pp. 18-9.
[118] Ziya Gökalp. "Vatan." *Yeni Hayat: Şiirler*, edited by Salim Çonoğlu, Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, p. 27.

In *Principles of Turkism*, he also delves into "religious Turkism," which is about the idea that all sermons and religious books should be in Turkish. Gökalp argued that it was necessary for people to be able to read and appreciate the true essence of their religion, and also to be able to understand what the preachers were saying so that they could enjoy the services.

This was precisely the point of contention for many conservative Islamists, who believed that a reform program would ultimately veer into religious affairs. Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy) was such a figure, who throughout his life defended the status quo of language, and argued for a reconnection with Islamic identity. Writing in the Islamist and politically conservative weekly *Sırâtımüstakim* in 1910 about the state of language instruction in schools, Âkif emphasizes the importance of language education at the very beginning of his article:

> Bir kere Türkçemiz başlı başına bir dil olmayıp şarkın en mühim lisânı olan Arap, Acem lisânlarının muâvenetiyle yaşadığından, bir de kim ne isterse desin, mufrit bir tasfiyeye tarafdâr olanlar ne kadar uğraşırsa uğraşsın, Osmanlılar için bu iki lisândan aldıkları kelimelerin birçoğunu geri vermek ne şimdiki halde ne de gelecek zamanda kâbil olamayacağından; hattâ fünûn-i hâzırayı memleketimize getirdikçe vaz'ına mecbûriyet görülen ıstılâhât için yeniden kelimeler, terkipler istikrâzında muztar kalacağımızdan lisân derslerine verilecek ehemmiyet çok görülmemelidir.[119]

> For one thing, our Turkish is not a language on its own but lives with the aid of Persian and the most important language of the East, Arabic, and also no matter what anyone says, however much supporters of an extreme purification struggle, since for Ottomans to return many of the words that they've taken from these two languages will not be possible neither in the present state nor in the future; moreover, the importance placed on language lessons should not be seen as too much because as we bring contemporary sciences to our country we will be forced to again borrow words and compositions for determining terminology.

This elaborate sentence provides a very clear and concise overview of Âkif's language politics: first, Âkif sees Turkish not as an independent language but one that's deeply connected to Arabic

---

[119] Mehmet Âkif Ersoy. *Sırâtımüstakim*, vol. 4, edited by Ertuğrul Düzdağ. İstanbul: Bağcılar Belediyesi, 2015, p. 304.

and Persian; second, it would be not only impossible to separate Turkish from Arabic and Persian as Turkish exist in this very hybridity, and thirdly, Turkish needed these languages for coining new words. Here Âkif underscores what contemporary scholars have come to term an Ottoman interculture, which describes how the Ottoman Turkish language had "absorption of diverse … conventions from Persian, which had in turn absorbed and appropriated Arabic over the centuries" and thus should not be seen through an Orientalist lens of originality and mimicry which partitioned Ottoman Turkish into artificial segments of "Arabic," "Persian," and "Turkish."[120] At the very end of the same article, Âkif also criticizes the idea of replacing Eastern influences with Western ones:

> Arab, Acem lisanlarıyle uğraşacak zamanda değiliz; yalnız akvâm-ı mütemeddinenin dillerini öğrenelim, diyenlere de deriz ki:

> Sizin teklifiniz tıpkı coğrafya kitablarımızdan Asya, Afrika kıtalarını artık kaldıralım demeye benziyor! A kuzum bizim o mütemeddin akvamın arazisinde bir karış toprağımız yok. Bize orada ne ektirirler, ne de biçtirirler. Biz Asya'da ekeceğiz, Asya'da biçeceğiz.

> We respond to those who say that we're not in the era of engaging with Arabic and Persian languages, we should only learn the languages of civilized nations:

> Your offer resembles/sounds like we should take off the Asian and African continents from our geography books! O my lamb, we don't have an inch of land in the domains of those civilized nations. We're going to sow in Asia, reap in Asia.

Yet Âkif was not simply against any form of standardization. He recognized a need for reform but dismissed radical ones that were supposedly meant to connect disparate Turkic peoples across a vast geography. In another poem, which takes up his entire fourth book of poetry,

---

[120] Kristin Dickinson. *DisOrientations: German-Turkish Cultural Contact in Translation, 1811–1946*. Pennsylvania University Press, 2021, p. 16.

published in 1914, he reiterates his position concerning Western languages, emphasizes that he isn't against reform, and states that being anti-change is tantamount to madness.

| Biraz değişmeli artık bu eski zihniyyet | This mentality should change a little |
| "Lisâna hiç yenilik sokmayın!" demek: cinnet | Saying "Don't introduce novelties into language": madness |

Yet later on, he is quick to emphasize that such a reform can't be about simply bringing in European languages to replace the influence of Eastern languages, as this would go against its natural development and character.

Tasarrufatını aynen alırsak İngilizin, Fransızın,	If we were to take the possessions of the English, French verbatim
ne olur hâli, sonra, şîvemizin?	what would be the state of our dialect?
Lisânın olmalıdır bir vakâr-ı millîsi,	Language should have a national solemnity,
O olmadıkça müyesser değil te'âlisi	Without it its rise is not[/cannot be] auspicious

While Gökalp and Âkif were seemingly polar opposites in terms of their politics, it is important to note their similarities as well. Both espoused the timely and pressing importance of language reform and the idea that language needed to be seen as having a distinct dignity and solemnity. Ultimately, language was paramount for maintaining and ensuring a national identity and unity. But, whereas Gökalp was more interested in the idea of a "purer" Turkish with its, perhaps imaginary, potential of bringing all Turkic peoples together, Âkif was more interested in the Ottoman-Turkish connection to Islam and other Muslims through the prevalent Arabic element by both the script and loanwords.

The Alphabet and Language Reforms of the Turkish Republic

The Alphabet Reform [*Harf İnkılabı/Devrimi*] of 1928 and the Language Reform [*Lisan İnkılabı/Dil Devrimi*] of 1932 are intertwined with the Qur'anic translation project. The Alphabet Reform paved the path for the vernacularization, simplification, purification, and standardization of spoken Turkish,; it also "contributed to the building of a secular national language and culture."[121] There had been discussions of adopting the Alphabet Reform as early as the 19th century in the late Ottoman Empire and there were also debates in the Turkish parliament shortly after its founding.[122] At this point, it's important to mention that the language debates predated the Kemalist monolingual project, "though during the late Ottoman Empire such debates were limited to a relatively small circle of intellectuals and the content mostly remained along social and philological lines," notes Yeşim Bayar, who adds that "it was only during the Kemalist era that the language issue was brought to center stage and its relationship to nation-building clearly articulated."[123] The language issue became an important means to an end in two ways. The Ottoman language was written in the Perso-Arabic script, which has an important connection to Islam. First, it was through language reforms that it became possible for the Turkish state to simultaneously fracture the relations to religion and Ottoman culture (initially with the Alphabet reform and later on by purging Arabic and Persian words). Second, through the homogenization and standardization of language, the state hoped to create a public that could participate in the new democratic form of government. Still, the Alphabet Reform was conceived, researched, announced, and made into law in dizzying speed, in less than 5 months. On 27 June 1928, an "alphabet committee" was announced and shortly after on 9 August 1928 Mustafa Kemal

---

[121] Hale Yılmaz. *Becoming Turkish*: *Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945*. Syracuse University Press, 2013, p. 140.
[122] On the events and discussions that lead up to the Alphabet Reform, see İlker Aytürk, "The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: The Language Council from 1926 to 1931." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2008, pp. 275–293.
[123] Yeşim Bayar. *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 38.

publicly announced the upcoming adoption of the Latin alphabet in Gülhane — the same space where the Tanzimat Edict of 1839 was announced. On 1 November 1928 it was ratified into law in the parliament. All Turkish journals and newspapers switched to the new alphabet on 1 December 1928. A month later, in January 1929, Arabic and Persians lessons in schools were discontinued.

The state-sponsored literacy campaigns and official statements derided the Perso-Arabic alphabet as being difficult to learn and thus an impediment to literacy. Government officials acknowledged the secularization component only in private. Yet the fact that the swiftness of the adoption and, more importantly, the ban on publishing using Arabic letters which bordered on criminalization suggest that it was as much about destroying the link to an Islamic East as it was about Westernization and modernization, "the purpose of the change of alphabet was to break Turkey's ties with the Islamic east and to facilitate communication domestically as well as with the Western world."[124] Both Nergis Ertürk and Kristin Dickinson emphasize an important aspect of the Alphabet Reform, made visible in the promotion of the script change. The script change was transmitted as a necessary correction, uniting the Turkish language with an authentically Turkish alphabet while getting rid of foreign and alien element, that marred the language itself. İlker Aytürk emphasizes that this change should be analyzed within the context of "switching civilizations (*tebdil-i medeniyet*), as a reform that removed probably the most visible marker of Islam from Turkey."[125] But the restrictions on Islamic education and on the teaching of Arabic and Persian had already made it very difficult for the new generations to access the Qur'an without the mediation of a Turkish translational project. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Akif's extant

---

[124] Geoffrey Lewis. *The Turkish Language Reform: a Catastrophic Success*. Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 27.
[125] İlker Aytürk. "Script Charisma in Hebrew and Turkish: a Comparative Framework for Explaining Success and Failure of Romanization." *Journal of World History,* vol. 21, no. 1, 2010: pp. 97–130, p. 124.

manuscripts show that he continued to use the Perso-Arabic alphabet for his Qur'an translation, like many other conservative Islamists who continued to use the Perso-Arabic alphabet in their own manuscripts and in private correspondence. Âkif also published his last book of poetry, *Gölgeler,* in Cairo in 1933 in the old script.

Following the debates concerning the purification of Turkish after the Alphabet Reform, in July 1932, with Mustafa Kemal's initiative and directive, the Turkish Language Society was founded. This coincided with the First Turkish Historical Congress. Only a few months later, the First Linguistic Congress, in September and October 1932 was convened. Already in 1930, the Turkish History Thesis had been published but its circulation was limited to only 100 copies. This curious book for the first time officially and systematically linked the entire human historical progress with the exploits of mythical, ancient Turks who were instrumental in establishing the great states of ancient times. Both these congresses expanded upon this pseudoscientific thesis. As Dickinson emphasizes, in "contrast to the official civic-territorial definition of national identity—for which ethnicity was not a key criterion—language reform arguably exhibited ethnocentric tendencies."[126] Thus in 1932, these ethnocentric tendencies and anti-Eastern, anti-Islamist became codified.

Taken in their totality, the abolishing of the caliphate and the Arabic letters, and also the Islamic dress code, schools, honorifics, the purification of Turkish from Arabic and Persian loanwords and grammar, the switch to Turkish *adhan* in less than ten years was seen not merely as modernization and secularization but as a conscious and inescapable form of de-Islamization. Thus, when the Language Reforms were implemented it didn't strike the conservatives as a shock.

---

[126] Kristin Dickinson. "Zafer Şenocak's "Turkish Turn": Acts of Crosslinguistic Remembrance in Köşk (The Pavilion)". *New German Critique*, vol. 45, no. 134: pp. 179–200, p. 185.

Turkish Secularism

The Turkish Republic did not base its political establishment and continued existence on religious legitimacy. At its inception, however, Turkish secularism was not about keeping religious affairs separate from politics and vice versa, but rather about subsuming religion within politics, as to control the direction of religion and also to constantly reproduce political legitimacy and sovereignty. In this sense, the formation of a Ministry of Religious Affairs also signals the goal of a nationalized form of Islam. While the Turkish state did not have a de facto official religion, it did indeed privilege Islam, and even then Sunni Islam over other heterodox forms of Islam. Thus, the religious reformation projects were undertaken to make a specifically "national" form of Islam compatible with the Turkish Republic's broader attempts at Western reorientation efforts. These were intrinsically tied to a mechanism of control and instrumentalization for political purposes. One important issue is that not only immaterial beliefs, ideas, rituals, and practices but also material objects that were not directly related to Islam but merely associated with it were epistemologically reconfigured as backward and thus made incongruous and incompatible with the Turkish Republic's conception of modernity. Shabab Ahmed emphasizes the inherent contradictions of this approach: "To conceptualize Islam in terms of the religious/sacred versus secular binary is both an anachronism and an epistemological error the effect of which is to *remake* the historical object-phenomenon in the terms of Western modernity."[127] But the leaders of the early Republican Era had internalized this view of Islam, which necessitated a radical transformation and reconfiguration of Islam's position in society, politics, culture and language. As Ahmed emphasizes "one of the great inconveniences experienced by the projects of secularization undertaken by modern Muslim

---

[127] Shabab Ahmed. *What is Islam: The Importance of Being Islamic.* Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 210.

states has been the absence of a readily-available institution within which to sequester 'religion/Islam,' with the result that such an institution has had to be invented along with the concomitant re-making of the 'religion.' "[128] This is precisely what happened in the Turkish context. This is thus how Ahmed frames the formation—or "invention," as he puts it—of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which served to judiciously manufacture the category of a 'private religion' in binary opposition to a secular public.[129] Since the Turkish language reforms ultimately meant disavowing and purifying the Persian and Arabic elements and thus Islamic influences, the site of language is where projects of nationalism and secularism became enmeshed.

Untranslatability and the Qur'an

Another complication concerns the translatability of Qur'an, in the sense of how Islam conceptualizes the Qur'an as a text that is also the unmediated, original word of God. The issue of Qur'anic translations is complex and historically fraught. While today, there are many translations of the Qur'an in the languages of both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, there were very few translations until the 20th century and translating the Qur'an was often seen as heretical. In the Ottoman Empire, Abdulhamid II had banned the translations of the Qur'an into Turkish. More importantly, for Muslims the Qur'an--which consists of the direct, unmediated word of God delivered, recited and finally composed in Arabic--is *untranslatable*. In their contention, it can be merely approximately rendered in another language.

---

[128] Ibid., p. 190.
[129] Ibid.

The central conception for this untranslatable quality of the Qur'an is "i'jaz," which refers to the inimitability of the Qur'an, the fact that its splendor cannot be matched by humans. As Afnan Fatani notes, the Qur'an is understood as a self-referential text that refers to itself as "linguistic miracles revealed in a 'pure Arabic tongue' (*lisanun 'arabiyyun mubin*; 16.103)." [130] The Qur'anic verses 12:2, 13:37, 16:103, 20:113, 26:195, 39:28, 41:3, 41:44, 42:7, 43:3, and 46:12, all refer to the fact that the Qur'an is in Arabic, with 26:195 emphasizing that it is in a "clear/plain Arabic" language so that it can be understood. Islamic theologians argue that one can only translate 'the meanings' of the Qur'an and not the Qur'an itself. Moreover, a "so-called literal translation that follows closely the syntactic patterns of the original regardless of meaning is unanimously rejected. This is not only because it distorts the text but also because a literal reproduction might be perceived to be as verbatim and as divine as the Arabic original, and might thus be liable to supersede it." [131] Usually the translations of the Qur'an are bilingual; these translations merely supplement the Arabic source-text on a facing page and thus "[w]hat is being rendered in these bilingual translations is not the various connotations or so-called secondary senses of words but rather their primary or core sense." [132] Ultimately, Qur'anic expressions and structures are Qur'an-bound and cannot be reproduced in an equivalent manner to the original in terms of structure, mystical effect on the reader, and intentionality of source text. Inaccuracies and skewing of sensitive Qur'anic information will always be the by-product of any Qur'an translation. [133]

---

[130] Afnan H. Fatani, "Language and the Holy Qur'an," *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Oliver Leaman, Routledge, 2005, pp. 657-660: p. 657.
[131] Ibid., 658.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Hussein Abdul-Raof. *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*. Routledge, 2001.

Informed by these ideas of inimitability and untranslatability, Turkish translations of the Qur'an are seldomly referred to as translations but are rather understood as *meâl* (rendering/interpretation/adaptation, Ar. مآل ma'al) and are generally accompanied by *tefsir* (exegesis, Ar. تفسير tafsir .(This issue stems from not only the idea that the Qur'an is untranslatable but also from the reticence and humility on the translator's part ,since if they were to label their translation as a translation proper they would be challenging this well entrenched idea and could be seen as heretical.

The Turkish State's Official Translation of Key Islamic Phrases

Granted, when compared to state issued translations of key Islamic phrases, said to be overseen by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself, Âkif's translations are still much more in line with tradition and conservative. But the brevity of these phrases makes for an uneven and unfair comparison. In 1932, the Turkish state hurriedly began to prepare for a switch to Turkified Islamic worship. In January and February, a series of public recitations of the Qur'an were performed in historically significant places such as Haghia Sophia, a mosque converted from a Byzantine church.

Salawat (صَلَوَات (Islamic Salutation when the Prophet's name is mentioned

Tanrı Elçisi Muhammet Salat Sana Selam Sana	Ey Tanrının elçisi Muhammet senin üzerine olsun rahmet ve selamet	Ey Tanrı Elçisi Muhammet Sanadır Rahmet ve Selamet	God's messenger Muhammad, salutations to you and peace to you
Tanrı Sevgilisi Muhammet Salat Sana Selam Sana	Ey Tanrının sevgilisi Muhammet senin üzerine olsun rahmet ve selamet	Ey Tanrı Sevgilisi Muhammet Sanadır Rahmet ve Selamet	God's beloved Muhammad, salutations to you and peace to you

Tanrı Elçileri Salat Sizlere Selam sizlere	Ey Tanrının elçileri sizin üzerinize olsun rahmet ve selamet	Ey Tanrı Elçileri Sizedir Rahmet ve Selamet	God's messengers, salutations to you and peace to you

Curiously, the Turkish state prepared and disseminated three versions of the *salawat*'s translation.[134] These three translations are very close to each other in terms of meaning, yet there are slight variations in grammatical forms of address and verb tenses (for example, the first and the third translations use the Turkish form of the dative, "to you" while the second one uses "upon you") the first one uses "salat" [prayer or salutation, Ar. صَلَاة) and "selam" [peace, Ar. سَلَّمَ]. And the second and the third translations use rahmet (رحمة) and "selamet" (plural of "selam", peace), and the vocative particle "ey" (an equivalent of the English vocative particle "O") precede God. These differences between these three different translations do not correspond to any remarkable position in terms of language politics, but more about the word order and utilizing different grammatical cases.

Takbir (تَكْبِير)

Tanrı uludur tanrı uludur	God is great God is great
Tanrıdan başka tanrı yoktur	There is no God but God
Tanrı uludur tanrı uludur	God is great God is great
Hamd ona mahsustur	All praise is due to God

Takbir is a common daily phrase for Muslims, but the Turkish translation is not a direct translation but a combination of not only Takbir, but also Tawhid (تَكْبِير) or Tahmid (تَكْبِير).

---

[134] Arguably, this was done to create the illusion of choice, but that still does not explain why only *salawat* was offered with multiple translations, and there's no record that explains the reasoning behind this decision.

Adhan (أَذَان) The Islamic Call to Prayer

Tanrı uludur	God is great.
Şüphesiz bilirim, bildiririm	I know and attest that without a doubt
Tanrı'dan başka yoktur tapacak	There is nothing but God to worship.
Şüphesiz bilirim, bildiririm	I know and attest that without a doubt
Tanrı'nın elçisidir Muhammed	There is nothing but God to worship.
Haydin namaza, haydin felaha	Hasten to the prayer, hasten to the salvation.
(Namaz uykudan hayırlıdır.)	(Prayer is better than sleep)

Unsurprisingly, these state sanctioned translations mirror the language reforms and are strikingly purified from Persian and Arabic loanwords. The crucial issue is that in the translations of *adhan*, *salawat* and *takbir* the Arabic word for God, Allah, has been replaced with the Turkic word *Tanrı*, and the etymological origin of the word can be traced back to polytheistic religious belief systems of Turkic tribes of Central Asia and their Sky God named "Tengri." Certainly, this word choice was not coincidental but related to the efforts of radical secularization. The vernacular translations, carefully cleansed from Arabic and Persian clearly show that these translations were not merely undertaken to make Islam accessible to the Muslim populace but also shift the perception of their religion in both subtle and stark ways. Following the reforms that banned Sha'ria courts, Islamic educational centers, honorifics and garb, the translation practices were the final stage in the Turkish states' attempt to control and nationalize Islam and disseminate its own version of it.

On the road to translating the Qur'an

On February 25th, 1925, the Turkish Parliament ratified a Turkish translation of the Qur'an. Âkif was approached for the translation. According to witnesses, Âkif refused the offer of the Ministry of Religious Affairs multiple times. He was deeply reluctant towards accepting the offer.[135] Âkif only relented after his close friends got involved to persuade him and when he successfully negotiated that his translation wasn't going to be labelled as a proper translation (tercüme) but as a "meâl," or an interpretative, personal translation. A document in the Presidential State Archives dated October 1925 attests to an arrangement with Âkif and Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır for a translation and an exegetical commentary of the Qur'an, Âkif was tasked with the translation and Hamdi Yazır with the exegesis.

Immediately after he signed this contract, however, Âkif relocated to Egypt on a self-imposed exile, as his own politics and religious beliefs clashed with the state's agenda. He started his translation in early 1926 and worked on it for 10 years until his death in 1936, with the hopes of perhaps publishing it someday if the political situation concerning Islam in Turkey changed. He worked on the first draft between 1926 and 1928, and then revised his manuscript between 1929 and 1932. But in 1932, he dissolved his contract with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. For Âkif the problem was not necessarily a problem of language politics, but it was about the politics concerning religious affairs, specifically, Islamic worship in Turkish, which he thought to be anti-Islamic. Âkif had become much more tolerant of language simplification, and

---

[135] Ben bir ara, Âkif Bey'in çekingenliğini yersiz buldum. Bu hali tassubuna hamleder gibi oldum …. içini şu yolla boşalttı. 'Oğlum, sen bu işi basit mi sanıyorsun? Tercümesi istenen eser roman değil, beşeriyetin ictimai mihverini değiştiren Kur'an'dır. Herhangi bir ifade ve ibarenin bile her tabirinde, hatta her kelime ve harfinde —dil bilgisi bakımında— tasrih ve teşmiş, ta'rif ve tenkir gibi incelikler vardır. Mesele Kelâmullah'a gelince… Başka bir dil ile bi-hakkın söylemek mümkün olur mu?
At one point, I found Âkif Bey's hesitation/reluctance untoward. I was leaning towards attributing his attitude to his fanaticism. […] But he unburdened himself thusly: 'My son, do you think this is an easy job? The work to be translated is not a novel but it's the Qur'an that has changed humanity's social axis. In the expression of, even in every word and in every letter of any statement and expression there are refinements such as explication and expansion/explication, descriptions and ambiguations, in terms of grammar. … *When it comes to the word of God is it possible to say it … with a different language?* (italics mine)

his reluctance did not stem from having to produce a more vernacular translation. In a letter, he himself defends his more vernacular transition thusly:

> Bir müddet sonra üstad yaptığı bir miktar tercümeyi Hamdi Efendiye gönderdi. Bu hususta onun fikrini sordu. Hamdi Efendi çok güzel, çok selis ve sade olduğunu, ancak cezalet hususunda biraz zayıf bulduğunu yazdı. Üstad cevap verdi: 'Evet, doğrudur. Cezalet itibariyle böyledir. On sene evvel yazsaydım cezalet olurdu, fakat bugün lisanda sadeliğe doğru büyük tahavvül var. Onun için cezaletten ziyade sadelik cihetini iltizam ettim.

> Hamdi Efendi wrote that the translation was very beautiful, fluent and simple but he found it a bit weak in terms of *cezalet* (جزعالت) [roughly, elocution]. The master replied: "Yes, that is correct. It is such in terms of *cezalet*. If I had written it ten years earlier? there would have been *cezalet*, but today there's a great change towards simplicity. Therefore rather than *cezalet* I upheld the simplicity aspect."

The problem was that the Turkish state has been trying to implement new reforms, this time about making worship in Turkish official. The goal was to recite the *adhan* in Turkish, make all sermons in Turkish, and even enforce the use of a Turkish Qur'an for private prayer, criminalizing Arabic *adhans* and sermons in public. This was Âkif's main point of contention and therefore he never submitted his translation to the authorities.

> Tercüme güzel oldu, hatta umduğumdan daha iyi. Lâkin onu verirsem, namazda okutmaya kalkacaklar. Ben o vakit Allahımın huzuruna çıkamam ve Peygamberimin yüzüne bakamam.

> The translation turned out to be well, even better than I hoped. But if I were to give it (hand it over?), they are going to attempt to use it for *adhan*. If that were to happen, I can't appear in the presence of my God and can't look at my Prophet's face.

Before he left Egypt for Istanbul, he entrusted his manuscript to a friend, Yozgatlı İhsan Efendi, and told him that if he were to return, they would work on the manuscript together but that if he did not return, that İhsan Efendi should burn it. Âkif never returned to Egypt and succumbed to illness in 1936. According to İhsan Efendi's son, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu and others, the manuscript wasn't burned immediately, but the task was completed later by others, after İhsan Efendi's death and in the immediate aftermath of the 1960 coup. Many scholars have argued that

Âkif's decision to renege on his translation contract with the state in 1932, his will for the manuscript to be burned should he not return to Egypt, and the burning of two full copies, Âkif's own handwritten manuscript and a copy with İhsan Efendi's corrections and suggestions in 1961, were all influenced by the same reason: that it would be used for worship in Turkish. Taken in context, this fear was not baseless, as the 1960 coup was indeed a shock to the Islamists. The process of Islamization of public discourse during the Demokrat Parti administration, which was in power between 1950-1960, was one of the key implicit reasons for the 1960 Turkish coup.[136] Following the coup, Adnan Menderes, the leader of the Demokrat Parti and the Prime Minister since 1950, was imprisoned and subsequently, after a lengthy trial, found guilty and executed.[137] Therefore, the perceived threat of a return of the areligious days of the early Republic might also explain why the Turkish conservatives in Egypt had resorted to the burning of the manuscript.

In 2012, a supposedly surviving copy of the first third of the manuscript was published. A student in Egypt had copied a portion of the manuscript and had entrusted it to his son before his death. The manuscript was then given by the son to one of the editors, Recep Şentürk, who safeguarded it for close to 25 years. Şentürk waited until he was sure that the book wouldn't be used by the state for worship in Turkish, so it's not a coincidence that it was published during the AKP government, the sole governing party of Turkey since 2002 with openly Islamist leanings. Another important issue remains: Şentürk claims in his introduction to the publication and in a collection of conference proceedings about the translation, that the publication of Âkif's manuscript wouldn't constitute going against Âkif's will because, Şentürk argues that Âkif

---

[136] Known as *27 Mayıs Darbesi* in Turkish. It wa instigated by an army colonel, Alparslan Türkeş — who then went on to establish the Turkish ultranationalist party Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) [The Nationalist Movement Party].

[137] Among the charges of which he was found guilty was his claimed role in the 1955 pogroms against non-Muslims, especially Greeks, of Istanbul, which is discussed in the following chapter.

wanted to publish his work and his hesitation stemmed from his unwavering opposition and resistance to state mandated worship in Turkish and that crisis had been averted.

Translation Examples

Âkif's Qur'anic translations come from two distinct periods, first, his translations of verses which were published in the journal *Sebülreşad* in the early 1910s, and second, from the two different extant manuscripts of his Qur'an translation from the late-1920s and early-1930s. Comparing these texts from the two distinct periods, before and after the establishment of the Turkish Republic and the successive language reforms conclusively show that while Âkif's views concerning Islam and political debates surrounding Islam and the Qur'an didn't change, he did internalize the language debates concerning simplification and purification in Turkish. While there are many longer passages that were translated multiple times, I have selected the example of Al-Fatiha, the first *surah* (chapter) of the Qur'an, for comparison. This example is not only short, but it is also extremely important, because of its prevalence in Islamic worship. There are four extant versions of Âkif's translation of Al-Fatiha. In English translation, it reads as follows:

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee we worship and from Thee we seek help. Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray.

The first version is from 1912-3, which Âkif has prepared with Babanzade Ahmed Naim and edited based on the feedback of İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, Kuşadalı Rıza Efendi and Kamil Miras:

> Hamd Allah'ın, O, alemleri nizamlayan. Çok esirgeyen, koruyan. Ceza gününün sahibi. Allahım yalnız sana ibadet ederiz ve yalnız senden yardım dileriz. Allahım bizi doğru yola hidayet eyle. O kendilerine ihsan ettiğin mü'minlerin yoluna. Hışm olunanların değil, sapkınların da değil.

Another version is included in his translation of 'Abd al-'Azīz Jawīsh's "Response to the Anglican Church" from 1916:

bHamd o Allah'a edilir ki Rabbü'l-âlemîn'dir; bütün mahlûkâtı için merhametlidir, hesab gününün sahibidir. İlâhî! Kulluğu yalnız Sana ederiz, yardımı da ancak Senden isteriz. Bizlere doğru yolu, nimetine eren kimselerin yolunu göster; gazabına uğramış, azıp sapmış olanların yolunu değil!

The remaining two translations are from his Qur'an translation project, the first one is from a surviving hand-written manuscript, recently uncovered among the notes of Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, who was preparing the exegesis that was supposed to accompany Âkif's translation but later on took on the translation after Âkif reneged on his contract:

Hamd ancak Allah'ın, o Rabbü'l-'âlemîn, o hem Rahmân hem Rahîm, o kıyâmet gününün sâhibi Allah'ındır.

İlâhî, kulluğu Sana ederiz; yardımı Senden isteriz.

Bizleri doğru yolun, o nimetine kavuşanların tuttuğu yolun yolcusu et; gazabına uğrayanların, yanlış gidenlerin saptığın yolun yolcusu etme. Âmiin.

This second is from a typed manuscript, believed to be made in Egypt by someone other than Âkif himself:

Hamd ancak Allah'ın; o Rabbü'l-âlemîn, o hem Rahman hem Rahim, o kıyamet gününün sahibi Allah'ındır. İlâhî! Kulluğu Sana ederiz, yardımı Senden isteriz. Bizleri doğru yolun, o nimetine kavuşanların tuttuğu yolun yolcusu et. Gazabına uğrayanların, yanlış gidenlerin saptığı yolun yolcusu etme. Amin.

The English Translation:

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee we worship and from Thee we seek help. Guide us upon the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those who incur wrath, nor of those who are astray.[138]

All these versions are very close to each other, but it's very interesting that the earliest translation he produced in consultation with others is the most colloquial and devoid of any Arabic grammar. At the same time, his later translations show an increase in the number of

---

[138] Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E. B. Lumbard, and Mohammd Rustom, eds. *The Study Quran*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015, p. 1.

words. This can also be attested in Âkif's translations of other chapters in his final Qur'anic manuscripts, where he uses not only more "pure" Turkish words but also vernacular colloquialisms and turns of phrase.

In another example, this time from the 8th chapter, titled *al-Anfal*, the Spoils, the differences are stark. Âkif had published three variations in the journal in different years:[139]

"Ey iman eden kimseler! Allah ile Peygamber'in size hayat verecek davetine icabet ediniz; hem iyi biliniz ki Allah insanın kendisi ile kalbi arasına girer; şu da malûmunuz olsun ki sizler O'nun huzurunda toplanacaksınız." (from 1912)

"Ey cemaat-i müslimîn, ey Allah'ın dinine iman edenler! İcabet ediniz: Allah'a, Allah'ın davetine, Allah'ın Resûlüne, o resûl-i muhteremin davetine, evet, onların sizin için hayat-ı mahz olan davetine… Allah'ın, Resûlü'nün sizin hakkınızda mahz-ı hayat olacak birçok evâmiri var; onları ifa ederseniz gerek bugünkü hayat-ı faniyenizde, gerek yarınki hayat-ı sermediyenizde mesut olur, rahatla, saadetle yaşarsınız. Sonra bilmiş olunuz ki Cenab-ı Hakk, insanın kalbi ile kendi arasına girer, yani mahlûkunun bütün esrarına muttali olur. Şunu da biliniz ki yine merciiniz Allahu Zülcelâl'dir!" (from 1913)

"Ey Tanrı'nın birliğine, Kitab'ına, Peygamber'ine, sair inanılması zaruri olan şeylerin hepsine inanan, hepsini samim-i kalb ile tasdik eden Müslümanlar! İcabet ediniz, itaat ediniz, yürüyünüz, koşunuz; Allah'a doğru, Peygamber'e doğru koşunuz. Sizi ihyâ edecek; dünyada, ukbâda hayatınızı, necâtınızı, saadetinizi temin eyleyecek, her türlü manasıyla hayat verecek, ruh verecek evâmirini, ahkâmını, vesâyâsını kabule sizleri davet ettikleri zaman… İyice bilmiş olunuz ki Cenab-ı Hakk insanın kendisiyle kalbi arasına girer; yani onun yalnız harekâtını değil, kalbinden geçen maneviyatını da görür; ne düşündüğünü, ne yapmak istediğini bilir. Kezâlik şunu da hatırınızdan hibir zaman çıkarmayın ki ne olursanız olunuz, ne türlü yaşarsanız yaşayınız, sonunda Allahu Zülcelâl'in huzuruna çıkarak bu âlemdeki bütün işlerinizin, bütün düşüncelerinizin, elhasıl bütün hayatınızın hesabını vereceksiniz." (from 1920)

In his Qur'an translation:

"Ey iman edenler! Sizi kendinize hayat verecek şeylere davet ettikleri zaman Allah ile Peygamber'e icabet edin. Bir de bilin ki Allah insanın kalbi ile kendisi arasına girer. Şundan haberiniz olsun ki sizler haşr edilerek başkasının değil, O'nun karşısına çıkacaksınız."

The English translation:

---

[139] Dücane Cündioğlu, *Mehmet Âkif'in Kur'an Tercümeleri*. İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2005, p. 24.

O you who believe! Respond to God and the Messenger when he calls you unto that which will give you life. And know that God comes between a man and his heart, and that unto Him shall you be gathered.[140]

The similarities between his first translation and his Qur'an translation are striking. The second translation from 1913, is the most Ottoman-Turkish one, with a decidedly high register of Ottoman Turkish words. His first translation is the shortest with 33 words, but his third translation from 1920 comes at 113 words, more than three times the length of his shorter translations. This translation, in addition, to its verbose quality, wavers between modern Turkish and Ottoman Turkish. Interestingly, it includes the Turkish word for god, "*Tanrı*." There are other instances in which Âkif used this word, but he never once uses it in his Qur'anic translations opting for both رب (*Rabb*) [lord/master in Arabic) and الله (Allah) [God in Arabic], further demonstrating Âkif's changing approach and his nuanced development of Turkish language.

It is very difficult to make any sweeping statements about Âkif's translational strategies when comparing his earlier and final Qur'an translations. In general, Âkif's final translations show that in general he preferred a more vernacular version; when there are multiple translations of a certain passage available, his final translations are never obviously more Ottoman Turkish-inflected. What we can say definitively is that Âkif went about his translation practice with a *literary* sensibility that clashed with his politics and led him to both to leave Turkey and renege on his contract. His translation would have been perfectly accessible to his contemporaries, and to today's readers, additionally, he, at times taking some risks and liberties, tried to reproduce the style and intonation of the source text producing passages that are colloquial but at the same very different from the source text. It is precisely this sense of artistic consideration in his translation

---

[140] *The Study Quran*, p. 489.

that sets his work apart from other translations undertaken by scholars who shared a similar worldview.

A good comparison for understanding how far he internalized the Turkish vernacularization is a poem, *Adhans,* from his first book of poetry. Penned in 1908, Âkif extolls God and the virtues of faith, worship, and, expectedly, *adhan*. It's also full of Arabic and Persian loanwords and grammar. As stated above, in 1921, Âkif had also penned a poem of ten stanzas during the Turkish War of Independence, the first two of which later became the Turkish National Anthem. The final two verses of the eighth stanza read:

Bu ezanlar-ki şehâdetleri dînin temeli	These adhans, and their testimonies[141] is the foundation of religion,
Ebedî yurdumun üstünde benim inlemeli	Should roar over this homeland of mine, eternal.

This encapsulates his vehement opposition to a Turkified Islamic worship, but at the same underlines the striking vernacularity of his translation which is at times was very removed from Islamic conventions.

Following the dissolution of Âkif's translation contract, Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır was tasked with the translation as well. Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır stipulated in his contract that his translation and exegesis had to be published together. He also prepared an introduction for his translation, in which he wrote that using his Turkish translation for religious services would not be permissible. But the Turkish state published his translation separately and also censored his introduction. Ironically, when his translation was finally published by the Turkish state in 1935, it turned out be much more suffused with Ottoman Turkish sensibilities in terms of word choice

---

[141] The word that Âkif uses here is "şehadet" from the Arabic *Shahada* (اَلشَّهَادَةُ) which means both martyrdom and testimony/witnessing, like it does in the original Greek for martydrom.

96

and syntax and for today's readers it borders on illegible. The subsequent editions have been significantly edited and the language has been simplified to make it accessible to readers.

Conclusion

Following the general elections of 1950 when the founding party of the Turkish Republic lost the election to the more conservative Demokrat Parti, the ban on reciting the *adhan* in Arabic was lifted shortly thereafter. Almost overnight the whole country switched back to the Arabic *adhan*. This 18-year period remains the only period in history in which the *adhan* was recited in a language other Arabic. What Âkif's translation project shows is a curious alignment between a very influential Islamist conservative and Kemalist ideologies, in ethno-linguistic nationalist matters. While Âkif was hesitant to contribute to the state's secularization efforts, he did internalize and advanced the state's agenda in telling ways.

Chapter 3:

From Multilingualism to Monolingualism: Turkish Language Reforms and Armenians

> I may also mention that the book was written during the war and at Istanbul, where the libraries are not equipped for European studies. International communications were impeded; I had to dispense with almost all periodicals, with almost all the more recent investigations, and in some cases with reliable critical editions of my texts. Hence it is possible and even probable that I overlooked things which I ought to have considered and that I occasionally assert something that modern research has disproved or modified … On the other hand, it is quite possible that the book owes its existence to just this lack of a rich and specialized library. If it had been possible for me to acquaint myself with all the work that has been done on so many subjects, I might never have reached the point of writing.[142]
>
> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*

Introduction

For the past quarter century, this scene has been read as a chronicle of the composition of Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis* in Istanbul before and during World War II and its publication in the immediate aftermath of the war. Furthermore, it has been seen as emblematic of a certain condition. Now a major point of discussion in recent comparative literature scholarship, it's safe to say that this condition constitutes a critical turning point for the discipline. For example, building off of Auerbach's above cited remarks, it was Edward Said's postulation of Istanbul as a

---

[142] Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 557.

98

place of "Oriental, non-Occidental exile and homelessness"[143] that took hold of and imbued

Istanbul with a particular sense. His popular view claimed that Auerbach's exile in the non-space

of Turkey transformed him into an outsider both to his country of origin and also an outsider to

his adopted home. This outsider status, in turn, made it possible for him to reflect on the Western

tradition and compose a book of literary criticism which tracks the development and formation of

realism in Western literature over 3000 years. Ultimately this enabled him to escape Nazism,

both figuratively and literally speaking, and to save the said tradition and its at-risk heritage from

destruction by Nazis.

Instead of this perceived difference, I suggest that there's a semblance between Turkey

and Europe which is downplayed and negated at the expense of marginalized communities who

were suffering the adverse effects of conditions that prevailed in Turkey at the time of

Auerbach's exile: namely a totalitarian nationalism and also a rising monolingualism that

emanated from and reproduced nationalist sentiments. The major aim of this chapter then is to

complicate our understanding of this supposed foundational moment for the discipline of

comparative literature and lay bare the conditions in Istanbul that repressed, excluded, and

violated the civil rights of political, religious, and ethnic minorities of Turkey and rendered

extremely precarious the political and cultural belonging of these "other" citizens to the Turkish

state.

In this chapter, I argue that Istanbul needs to be revisited to show how, during

Auerbach's sojourn, a different kind of local exilic consciousness also existed in Istanbul, and in

order to complement the prevalent analyses of exiles from elsewhere with those who were from

Istanbul—exiles within Istanbul, so to speak. I illustrate the contentious dynamic between

---

[143] Edward Said. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 8.

language and citizenship and analyze the notion of monolingualism by looking at script and language reforms and tracking the rise of fervor surrounding Modern Turkish. Focusing on the life and works of the Armenian writers Hagop Martayan (also known as Agop Dilâçar in Turkey) and Zaven Biberyan in relation to language reforms, I consider how these changes affected the post-Genocide Armenian community, one of Istanbul's marginalized, "other" communities. In contrast to Auerbach's experience as an exile from elsewhere, Martayan and Biberyan's home ceases to be one. Yet, they weren't merely victims: they had voices and a complicated relationship with mechanisms of power. Furthermore, even as "exiles," they shunned silence and rather chose to resist and co-opt power in different and sometimes opposing ways. This stance circumvented traditional conceptions of exilic existence and the plight of the oppressed, silenced victims, subalterns.

Istanbul and Comparative Literature

In his essay "Secular Criticism," Edward Said comes across as astonished that Auerbach managed to write his magnum opus in Istanbul of 1940s: "[n]o reader of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, one of the most admired and influential books of literary criticism ever written, has failed to be impressed by the circumstances of the book's actual writing."[144] Said's contention is that Auerbach's writing *Mimesis* meant that he was "performing an act of cultural, even civilizational survival of the highest importance," facing the risk as an "exiled European would become an exorbitantly disoriented outcast from sense, nation, and milieu."[145] Focusing on Auerbach's own account of writing *Mimesis* in Istanbul (cited at the beginning of the essay), Said sees the "drama of this little bit of modesty" and finds it considerable. He argues that

---

[144] Ibid., 5.
[145] Ibid., 6.

"Auerbach's quiet tone conceals much of the pain of his exile" because "[y]et now in Istanbul [Auerbach] was hopelessly out of touch with the literary, cultural and political bases of [the] formidable tradition" within which he operated in Germany.[146]

These statements are only meaningful if Turkey is positioned as a complete anti-thesis to Europe; and Said does indeed emphasize a certain *historical* polarity and opposition by drawing attention to Istanbul's historical significance and perception, noting that "Istanbul represents the terrible Turk, as well as Islam, the scourge of Christendom, the great Oriental apostasy incarnate,"[147] which he claims wouldn't have been lost on Auerbach when he arrived. Thus, Said reiterates this difference, remarking that Auerbach's sojourn was the "ultimate alienation from and opposition to Europe … to the putative authority of ecclesia, humanistic learning, and cultural community."[148] But Auerbach's own depiction of Istanbul, no matter how problematic, contradicts Said's representation of Auerbach's supposed perception. In his own letters, Auerbach notes the cosmopolitan environment of Istanbul of the 1930s. He locates that cosmopolitanism partially in the distant past: "Istanbul is, after all, still a fundamentally Hellenistic city, for the Arab, Armenian, Jewish, and now the dominant Turkish element, too, all meld or coexist in an entity that is likely held together by the old Hellenistic kind of cosmopolitanism."[149] In the contrast of old and new, which he aligns with old world and European colonization, Auerbach finds this particular configuration not without issues. Specifically, he notes that Istanbul is a "city consisting of two different parts: the old Stambool, of Greek and Turkish origin, which still preserves much of the patina of its historic landscape,

---

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Erich Auerbach. "Letter to Johannes Oeschger," May 27, 1938, Nachlass Fritz Lieb, Universitätsbibliothek Basel (Handschriftenabteilung), NL 43 (Lieb) Ah 2,1. Translated by and quoted in Kader Konuk, *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Istanbul*. Standford University Press, 2010.

and the 'new' Pera, a caricature and completion of the European colonization of the 19th century, now in complete collapse. Here are the remains of dreadful luxury shops; Jews, Greeks, Armenians, all languages, a grotesque social life."[150] With a special of emphasis on the importance of mimicry and hybridity that Auerbach mentions in these passages, Kader Konuk has already conclusively demonstrated in her book *East West Mimesis*, that Istanbul of the 1930s and by extension the Turkish Republic had the resources and a network of scholars that Auerbach consulted. Thus, Auerbach's *Mimesis* emerged neither from a scholarly vacuum nor from a place that was completely foreign. Moreover, Konuk has also shown that it was a state-sponsored humanist project that was responsible for Auerbach's recruitment. Auerbach was precisely chosen for his complicated sense of belonging: he was invited to Turkey, because he was fully European while at the same time he was someone stripped of a sense of belonging who couldn't afford to have any loyalties to his country of origin—as opposed to, for example, a Nazi German scholar. This crucially amounts to a radical reassessment of Auerbach's exilic status—more than what Mufti calls "a rather literalist view of exile as such."[151]

My goal is not to show the invalidity of these claims of cultural and historical antinomies, but to bring out the morally ambiguous blind spot in Said's argument—which misses the implications of the socio-political climate within Istanbul and its status vis-à-vis Europe—which is later reproduced by other scholars. To shed new light on Said's notion of "exilic consciousness," I point out that Auerbach's arrival in Istanbul was concurrent with a different kind of exile: the exile of a number of Turkish citizens of different ethnic, religious, political and linguistic backgrounds—very much akin to the mechanisms and historical developments which

---

[150] Erich Auerbach. "Scholarship in Times of Extremes: Letters of Erich Auerbach (1933-46), on the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Death." Introduction and translation by Martin Elsky, Martin Vialon, and Robert Stein. *PMLA* vol. 122, no. 3, 2007, pp. 742–762.
[151] Aamir Mufti. *Forget English: Orientalisms and World Literature.* Harvard University Press, 2016, p. 3.

forced Auerbach to leave Germany in the first place. For Said, *Mimesis* was made possible and marked by an alienation in the form of forced displacement: "the book owed its existence to the very fact of Oriental, non-Occidental exile and homelessness."[152] Ironically, Said's argument rests on a fundamental difference, an irreconcilable gap between the Orient and Europe. Yet it was Auerbach himself who was cognizant of the similarity between the political conditions in Turkey and Europe, and in one of his letters from Turkey, points out exactly this similarity. He views it with interest, but from a cultural distance:

> The situation here is not exactly simple, but it is *not without charm*. They have thrown all tradition overboard here, and they want to build a thoroughly rationalized—extreme Turkish nationalist—state of the European sort. The process is going fantastically and spookily fast: already there is hardly anyone who knows Arabic or Persian, and even Turkish texts of the past century will quickly become incomprehensible since the language is being modernized and at the same time newly oriented on "Ur-Turkish," and it is being written with Latin characters …. The work is truly laborious because one has to battle with all the most curious difficulties, misunderstandings, resistances—yet, it is neither practically nor personally *uninteresting*.[153] [emphases added]

In this passage, Auerbach does indeed recognize the Turkish state's attempt to fashion a modern nation state, a "state of the European sort." Then how can Said's argument, which claims that "it was precisely [Auerbach's] distance from home—in all senses of the word—that made possible the superb undertaking of *Mimesis*,"[154] function without this ground of difference? At this juncture, my main criticism is about Said's assertion that Auerbach was "an exile in Istanbul at that time of fascism in Europe," which comes to mean that by relocating to Istanbul, Auerbach must have escaped fascism. Yet this sounds hollow, especially when we consider Auerbach's own impressions of Istanbul and the socio-political climate therein.

---

[152] Said, p. 8.
[153] Auerbach. "Scholarship in Times of Extremes," p. 749.
[154] Said, p. 6.

In various letters, Auerbach's impression of the socio-political climate in Istanbul pays special attention to issues of deculturalization and loss and disavowal of heritage. He posits a rupture of sorts, specifically revolving around issues of language and cultural politics:

> Needless to say, everything is badly modernized and barbarized, and increasingly so …. Piety is opposed, Islamic culture regarded as Arabic infiltration; they want to be seen as at once modern and purely Turkish, and it has gone so far that the language has been totally destroyed by getting rid of the old orthography and Arabic borrowings and replacing them partly with "Turkish" neologisms, partly with European appropriations: no young person can read the older literature anymore—and there reigns an intellectual directionlessness that is extremely dangerous.[155]

And the outcome of these developments is "a fanatical, anti-traditional nationalism: a renunciation of all existing Islamic cultural tradition, a fastening onto a fantasy 'ur-Turkey,' technical modernization in the European sense .... The result: Nationalism in the superlative with the simultaneous destruction of the historic national character."[156] These passages clearly attest to Auerbach's awareness and growing dissatisfaction with the political developments in Turkey.

Moreover, Auerbach recognizes this to be an international issue, saying "[t]his configuration, which in other countries such as Germany, Italy, and indeed also in Russia is not yet a certainty for everyone, steps forth here in complete nakedness . . . . I am more and more convinced that the contemporary world situation is nothing other than the cunning of providence to lead us along a bloody and circuitous route to the Internationale of Triviality and Esperanto culture."[157] Auerbach continues the comparison to draw out the particularity of the Turkish case: "I thought this already in Germany and Italy, especially in the horrifying inauthenticity of

---

[155] Erich Auerbach. "Letter to Johannes Oeschger," May 27, 1938, Nachlass Fritz Lieb, Universitätsbibliothek Basel (Handschriftenabteilung), NL 43 (Lieb) Ah 2,1. Translated by and quoted in Kader Konuk, *East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Istanbul*. Stanford University Press, 2010.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Erich Auerbach. "Letter to Walter Benjamin," December 3, 1937. "Scholarship in Times of Extremes: Letters of Erich Auerbach (1933-46), on the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Death." Introduction and Translation by Martin Elsky, Martin Vialon, and Robert Stein. *PMLA,* vol.122, no. 3, 2007, pp. 742–762. p. 751.

'Blubopropaganda,' but here for the first time it has become a certainty for me."[158]

These passages lay bare that Auerbach recognized that the issue revolved around a destructive form of nationalism that targeted both tradition and religion. The conflation of ultra-nationalism and the issue of language is also very telling. Yet curiously in this narrative there is no recognition of the communities whose native language wasn't Turkish—Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Jews, and Kurds and others—who were experiencing this form of deculturalization from a different perspective and facing different kinds of hurdles. Only in the comparison with Europe, the "horrifying inauthenticity of 'Blubopropaganda'," do we get the sense of Auerbach's implication that minority communities and minority cultures were also being targeted.

This particular way of addressing the problem of destructive nationalism and cultural rupture by positioning it vis-a-vis language can also be seen elsewhere in a more recent example. Referring to Orhan Pamuk's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech in 2006 in the first pages of his book *Forget English,* Aamir Mufti alludes to Pamuk's father's library of mostly European and Republican Turkish works "[as] a record of the disorientations of a Muslim society undergoing state-enforced Europeanization, suddenly cut off from the entire literary heritage produced until just a few decades earlier in a version of the same language but in another script."[159] In another example, Geoffrey Lewis in his seminal book on the Turkish language reform refers to "the often bizarre, sometimes tragicomic, but never dull story of the Turkish language reform" and names it a loss that "affects every Turk."[160] These examples are representative of the way the Turkish language reform is placed within a limited national framework, precluding a comprehensive

---

[158] Ibid.
[159] Aamir Mufti. *Forget English*, p. 3.
[160] Geoffrey Lewis. *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 4.

evaluation of the way linguistic ideology is intertwined with the destruction that nationalism brought to Turkey's marginalized communities.

To reiterate, Auerbach approach to these issues (echoed by scholars such as Mufti and Lewis in different ways) from the perspective of deculturalization—focusing on how language reform pertained to the hegemonic Turkish community and their literary tradition and historical heritage, and presenting this as a situation "not without charm," or as an "often bizarre, sometimes tragicomic, but never dull story"—completely disregards the repressive, violent effects of monolingualism that accompanied the linguistic reforms of Turkish nationalism. And solely focusing on the almost mythical trope of exile *to* Istanbul results in an oversight of what was happening to non-Muslim/non-Turkish communities *in* Istanbul. Moreover, subscribing to the way of thinking which states that the tragedy revolved mainly around a rupture and loss of heritage as a result of linguistic standardization and purification also misses the critical implications of the way language reforms were intertwined with a nationalist agenda and a monolingual paradigm.

The Monolingual Paradigm and the Rise of Modern Turkish

The early Republican period in Turkey is characterized by a movement towards an extreme form of historical narrative of what Edouard Glissant calls "root identity"[161]: the imagining and creation of a new form of historiography that disregards the known past and draws its power from a distant myth that also legitimizes the hegemonic community's claim of possession of a land, transforming it into a territory. What is at stake in the analysis that follows is a reconsideration of Turkish political and literary historiography that realigns the situation in

___

[161] Edouard Glissant. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Turkey with contemporary trends in Europe and maps the full extent of language reforms and their effects on political, cultural, and ethnic minorities of Turkey onto the foundations of comparative literature.

Taking stock here, I note that this chapter takes issue with the specific view that sees and, more importantly, reproduces and represents Turkish language debates and issues as a tragedy that befell solely on the Turkish population in its quest to give rise to a supposedly "pure mother tongue," which created a soulless, motherless culture with no tradition on its own for it to draw power from. My work is positioned against the kind of view that grounds and limits itself in a national framework. Ironically while trying to combat such a perspective, many scholars reproduce and get stuck in a nationalist historiography when they don't give a full account of the scope of the language debates and don't recognize the extent of language ideology's dependence on the notions of nationalism and citizenship. The view assumes that the policy of creating a new national language in Turkey was merely limited to "two main stages, first the adoption of the Latin script [in 1928, and] second, the creation of [pure Turkish] by eliminating all foreign elements [mainly Persian and Arabic, with the signing of Turkish language reform into law in 1923]."[162] It is usually the case that the effects of language policy are analyzed solely within a Turkish framework. Even if these analyses are critical, they pay no heed to the effects on minorities. Here I propose to put them in a comparative literature framework" to move beyond the tendency to view the project of language reform in Turkey with a sole focus on two historical events; to regard how exactly the dominating, exclusive monolingualism paradigm entrenched in the efforts of standardization and purification targeted non-monolingual Turkish speakers.

It must be noted that oversight of the larger matter of deculturalization plagues most

---

[162] Yılmaz Çolak. *"Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey." Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 40, no. 6, 2004, pp. 67–91, p. 68.

surveys of Turkish language reform's standardization and purification efforts.[163] Even the critical

and very engaging work of Nergis Ertürk's—who correctly identifies "Turkish linguistic

nationalism … [as belonging] purely neither to the imperial nor the anticolonial nationalisms of

the twentieth century" but looks at it from the perspective of phonocentrism—sees within it a

suppression of internal difference, a continuation of the efforts "to rationalize Ottoman Turkish

writing, eliminating the gap between the language's spoken and written registers."[164] In their

otherwise excellent essays, Hülya Adak, Nergis Ertürk and Jale Parla also place the emphasis

decidedly on the effects of language reform on Turkish literature.[165] Thus, even new kinds of

critical engagement with the Turkish language reform revolve specifically around Turkish

diglossia and its effects on Turkish literature.

A similar trend can be seen also in scholarly work on Greek[166] and Iranian[167] language

reforms. These constitute important examples because Persian and Greek were languages that

Turkish language reform targeted to varying degrees, while those languages' reforms themselves

targeted Turkish, aiming for its expulsion from the respective national language for the purposes

---

[163] This is most prevalent in earlier works on the subject. C.f., W. A. Edmonds. "Language Reform in Turkey and Its Relevance to Other Areas." *The Muslim World* 45.1 (1955): 53–60. Uriel Heyd, *Langauge Reform in Modern Turkey*. Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1954.

[164] Nergis Ertürk. "Phonocentrism and Literary Modernity in Turkey." *boundary 2*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2010, pp. 155–185, p. 156.

[165] Hülya Adak. "Introduction: Exiles at Home-Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies." *PMLA,* vol. 123, no. 1, 2008, pp. 20-26; Jale Parla. "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel." *PMLA*, vol. 123, no. 1, 2008, pp. 27-40.

[166] C.f., Robert Browning. "Greek Diglossia Yesterday and Today." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* no. 35, 1982, pp. 49–68; Geoffrey Horrocks. *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers*. 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010; David Mackridge. *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

[167] See A Majid Hayati, and Amir Mashhadi. "Language Planning and Language-in-Education Policy in Iran." *Language Problems and Language Planning* vol. 34, no. 1, 2010, pp. 24–42; K. Marszałek-Kowalewska. "Iranian Language Policy: a Case of Linguistic Purism." *Investigationes linguiticae* Vol XXII (2013): 89-103; Ludwig Paul. "Iranian Language Reform in the Twentieth Century: Did the First Farhangestān (1935-40) Succeed?" *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 3 no. 1, 2010, pp. 78–103; John R. Perry. "Language Reform in Turkey and Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* vol. 17, no. 03, 1985, pp. 295–311; Ali Ashraf Sadeghi. "Language Planning in Iran: a Historical Review." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 2001, no. 148, 2001, pp. 1–12.

of stability and purification. Studies of language reform mostly come from history and sociolinguistics, the dominant fields in scholarship that address these issues. But the same blind spot concerning the immediate effects of language reforms on minority literatures and rights exist in these works as well. Limited to historical and linguistics approaches and focused mainly on purification and word coinage, especially in Iranian, they fail to "envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality and to epistemology"[168] and, without bringing the minority languages in the fold, ultimately cannot fully address the ideological and political processes the set out to identify, as articulated by Ludwig Paul in his work on Iranian language reform:

> Aiming at the lexicon of a given language, language reforms often try to replace certain elements that are said to be "foreign" by "native" elements, even if the foreign elements have been part of the language's vocabulary for centuries and would hardly be considered foreign by any speaker of the language. Typically, language reforms that show such purist traits, are part of a nationalist ideology or project. Language reforms are not purely linguistic phenomena but combine ideological and political processes with effects that may be assessed in linguistic terms.[169]

Construed in this way, the study of Turkish language reform presents limited interest to other domains of inquiry for different area studies and disciplines. This presents first and foremost a methodological problem. If the theoretical tools and approaches have been hitherto responsible for this blind spot and fail to offer ways to "identify the ideological production of the diagram of social differentiation,"[170] new methods, approaches, and novel kinds of combinations should be sought after for a more complex reevaluation of diglossia and the ideological background it stems from and contributes to.

---

[168] Kathyrn A. Woolard,, and Bambi B. Schieffelin. "Language Ideology." *Annual Review of Anthropology,* vol. 23, no. 1, 1994, pp. 55–82, pp. 55-56.
[169] Ludwig Paul. "Iranian Language Reform in the Twentieth Century: Did the First Farhangestān (1935-40) Succeed?." *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2010, pp. 78–103, pp. 78-79.
[170] Kathyrn A Woolard, and Bambi B Schieffelin. "Language Ideology," p. 61.

My methodological suggestion here is to turn Said's notion of "exilic consciousness" on its head. Mufti identifies that the "Saidian critical position implies … not a contentless cosmopolitanism but a secularism imbued with the experience of minority—a secularism for which minority is not simply the name of a crisis."[171] From this perspective, it is clear that the language issue becomes a different kind of problem of non-religious conversion and is immediately linked to the notion of secularism. In this case, it is a type of secularism that doesn't track the processes of deislamization and/or subsume Islam for managing and controlling the population as a policy, but, as Mufti asserts, in this context, "stands in opposition not to religious concerns or beliefs per se but to the nation and nationalism as belief system."[172] It is also linked to the idea of conversion in the sense that, language became perhaps the most important tool in the early Republican Turkey to create a legible body of citizens and inscribe them with a new kind of belief, that of nationalism. As such, this demonstrates how language can be used to facilitate the shift from subjecthood and configure the modes of citizenship in a nation state.

The same tension is also brewing in Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other*. There Derrida presents a perplexing dialogue between two enigmatic interlocutors, whose identities are never disclosed. His book-length dialogue is a foray into the precarious relationship between citizenship, identity, and language. The discussion is grounded in, and stems from, Derrida's personal experience. As a child, he witnessed the revoking of French citizenship from the Franco-Maghrebian Jews of Algeria—which had been granted by the Crémieux decree of 1870—when the decree was abolished in October 1940, "without said group gaining back any

---

[171] Aamir R. Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1998, pp. 95–125, p. 97.
[172] Here Mufti is drawing from the Bruce Robbins's engagement with Said. C.f., Robbins, Bruce. "Secularism, Elitism, Progress, and Other Transgressions: On Edward Said's 'Voyage In,' " *Social Text*,no. 40 (Fall 1994): 25-38.

other citizenship. No other."[173] Derrida argues that "citizenship does not define a cultural, linguistic, or, in general, historical participation. It does not cover all these modes of belonging. At the same time, it is not some superficial or superstructural predicate floating on the surface of experience."[174] He posits that both citizenship and language are constantly at risk, with the threat of their revoking, and also their lapsing, always looming on the horizon. Moving between having citizenship and also belonging to a linguistic group, on the one hand, and, the removal, loss and lack of citizenship, on the other, Derrida works to deconstruct the notion of identity, "this concept of which the transparent identity to itself is always dogmatically presupposed by so many debates on monoculturalism or multiculturalism, nationality, citizenship, and, in general, belonging."[175] Derrida criticizes the simple understanding which affords identity creation and citizenship based on "belonging or non-belonging *of* language, this affiliation *to* language, this assignation to what is peacefully called a language."[176]

All of these issues become crystallized in Derrida's formulation, "I have one language but it's not mine"—a statement which unsettles the seemingly uncomplicated relationship between a language and its speakers: "[This language will never be mine], the only one I am thus destined to speak, as long as speech is possible for me in life and in death; you see, never will this language be mine. And, truth to tell, it never was."[177] The major questions embedded in the text are these: "who possesses a language," "whom does [the language] possess," and what does this notion of possession and ownership entail when the relationship between language and citizenship does not immediately overlap, when ideas about "the language called maternal, about

---

[173] Jacques Derrida. *Monolingualism of the Other, or, the Prosthesis of Origin*. Translated by Patrick Mensah. Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 15.
[174] Ibid., 15.
[175] Ibid., 14.
[176] Ibid., 17.
[177] Ibid., 2.

birth as it relates to soil, birth as it relates to blood, and birth as it relates to language, which means something entirely other, … and … the relationships between birth, language, culture, nationality, and citizenship"[178] form an unexpected constellation?

Derrida ultimately posits that "the language called maternal, is never purely natural, nor proper, nor inhabitable… There is no possible habitat without the difference of this exile and this nostalgia."[179] Speakers of any given language exist within that language, a language that is simultaneously "forbidding" and conversely "forbidden." Derrida admits that he's not aware "whether there are other examples of this in the history of modern nation-states, examples of such a deprivation of citizenship decreed for tens and tens of thousands of people at a time"[180] in which this dynamic of "forbidding-forbidden" marks the monolingual paradigm most deeply. Yet reading this text vividly brings out the hidden violence within the Turkish language reform—even though Derrida is not in a position to admit to the comparison. A direct semblance would be the experiences of the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and of the population exchange of 1923 between Greece and Turkey following the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922. These instances are directly linked to the question of what it means to have a mother tongue that may or may not correspond to an ethnic and/or a religious identity, and also to have a language that is "supposed to be maternal, but one whose source, norms, rules, and law were situated elsewhere."[181]

In this light, it becomes paramount to include the "exilic" experiences of non-Muslim citizens of Turkey and to further problematize and analyze how the impossible diglossia experienced by the minorities of Turkey stands as a compelling counterpoint to Derrida's points

---

[178] Ibid., 13.
[179] Ibid., 53.
[180] Ibid., 17.
[181] Ibid., 41.

and to the myth surrounding Auerbach. It is an impossible diglossia in the sense that it is the contradictory outcome of a harshly imposed monolingual paradigm, that actively seeks to change the linguistic practices of all citizens, but at the same time brings attention to any differences and divergences from an ideal conception of a model citizen. That is to say, the Turkish nation state required everyone to become native speakers of Turkish but at the same cut off the path to full nativity, integration, or even full assimilation, and expected and, perhaps begrudgingly, gave the right to its minorities to be bilingual/multilingual; or expected them to be functionally monolingual albeit with an accent that marks their difference in public while confining multilingualism to the private domain. İlker Aytürk explains, "the language reform was considered a means of democratization, a process that would lead to the closing of the gap between the languages of the ruling elite and the masses. It was suggested that a standard Turkish made available through the schooling system would facilitate and eventually bring about the active participation of every citizen in the decision-making process."[182]

But this view of "every citizen" definitely didn't include the Turkish state's considerable and various religious and ethnic minorities, as evidenced by the 1924 constitution which stated that only people who could read and write Turkish could enter the parliament. Furthermore, the constitution rejected the use of other languages of its minority communities, based on the understanding that all citizens of Turkey were "Turks", and all official communication should be conducted in Turkish. The only exceptions to this were the provisions that Turkey has accepted as part of the Lausanne Treaty, which granted several rights to the officially recognized *religious* minorities of Armenians, Greeks and Jews. In minority schools, education in the respective

---

[182] Sadri Maksudi [Arsal], *Türk Dili İçin* (Ankara: Tük Ocakları Ilim ve Sanat Heyeti Nesriyatı, n.d. [1930]), pp.290–316 quoted in İlker Aytürk. "The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: the Language Council From 1926 to 1931." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 18, no.03, 2008, pp. 275–293.

native language of these communities was officially allowed, and Turkish could only be taught as a required course.

As such, this recognition did not extend to Muslim minorities such as the Kurds, the largest minority then and now. (The percentage of people who disclosed that their native language was Kurdish is over 50% in some cities in Eastern Anatolia, such as Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt and Van). There were also communities that used Arabic, Albanian, Bosnian, Circassian, Georgian, and the Laz language. According to the national census of 1927, Turkish was not the native language of around 28 percent of the Istanbul's population. Out of 794,000 people in Istanbul, 92,000 spoke Greek, 45,000 spoke Armenian, 39,000 spoke Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), 6,000 spoke French, and another 6,000 spoke Albanian. The remaining 31,300 spoke, as their native language, Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, Circassian, or Bulgarian.[183]

The state addressed this unwanted, residual cosmopolitanism, which it saw as backward and reminiscent of the Ottoman system, in multiple ways that focused on language, as evidenced by the pamphlet *Struggle Against Cosmopolitanism and the Language Issue*.[184] Utilizing Derrida's ideas on monolingualism, Kristin Dickinson emphasizes that "[m]astery begins, as we know, through the power of naming, of imposing and legitimizing appellations."[185] She notes that the "Republican language reform in Turkey could be understood broadly as a project to conceptually rename and reshape society through the implementation of myriad individual acts of naming and renaming."[186] Specifically, she draws attention to the mandatory 1934 Law of Surnames, which required all citizens of Turkey to adopt pure Turkish last names, and also

---

[183] Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar.* Istanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1999, p. 157.
[184] Ahmet Refik Sıtkı. *Kozmopolitlikle Mücadele ve Dil Meselesi.* Samsun: Şems Matbaası, 1932.
[185] Derrida, *Monolingualism,* p. 39.
[186] Ibid.

bann[ed] the use of the Ottoman titles designating social or official rank.[187] But this mastery also extended to population control. The various communities cited above were dispersed, relocated, and put in close proximity to Turkish speaking communities. This follows and amplifies the notion of "standardization" and shows how exile became a mechanism of mastery of populations. It's important to note that mass migrations occurring within Turkey as a result of these policies actually brought Erich Auerbach and other German-Jewish émigrés to Istanbul. It was in this socio-political climate that Auerbach managed to find his version of humanism in Turkey.

The Settlement Law of 1934 was an extension of the desire to create a monolingual society by way of mass exile and resettlement policies. The Minister of Interior of the time, Şükrü Kaya, openly acknowledged this goal, saying that this "law will create a country that speaks the same language, thinks the same and has the same sentiments [affective disposition]."[188] Another way was to enforce a repressive monolingualism that prohibited (and tried to criminalize) the use of non-Turkish languages. During the Third Congress of Turkish Hearths in 1925, Şakir Turgut Bey stated that "within the Turkish Republic there are various groups that acknowledge Turkish culture and Turkishness. These citizens insist on using their old language, when are we going to Turkify them?" He petitioned the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to punish those who didn't speak Turkish.[189] During the same meetings, İzzet Ulvi brought up this issue and fiercely defended the idea that these communities should be disbanded and "we should … forbid them to wear their national clothes, to speak their national languages,

---

[187] Kristin Dickinson. "Where Language Is Ripped Apart: Absence and Illegibility in Bilge Karasu's *The Garden of Departed Cats." Critical Multilingualism Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2014, pp. 106-128, p. 112.
[188] *Cumhuriyet,* 15 June 1934, (3630).
[189] *Türk Ocakları Üçüncü Kurultay Zabıtları*, 1926, pp. 72-73.

and make the use of their national languages to be regarded as insulting."[190]

Debates similar to these continued and culminated in a nation-wide attack on use of non-Turkish languages shortly thereafter. On January 14th, 1928, the Law Faculty Students' Association of Istanbul University initiated a civil campaign, the now infamous "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" The nationalist organization Turkish Hearths invited the leaders of the students to discuss the campaign, and they formed a "Commission for the Protection and Expansion of Turkish Language" within the Hearths to teach Turkish all over the country and to inspect schools to ensure that there was proper Turkish education.[191] Backed with official financial support of the state, the campaign quickly took hold. "Citizen, do not make friends with or shop from those so-called Turkish citizens who do not speak Turkish. We request from our lady citizens who work as telephone operators: Please immediately cut off conversations in Greek and Ladino," said a newspaper article published in Izmir in 1928 merely two days after the "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaign had started.[192] Similar events with actual consequences followed. For example, the municipality of Istanbul prohibited street vendors from operating if they didn't comply with the law, which stated that they could appeal to their customers in Turkish.[193] In the parliament, there was even talk of revoking the citizenship of people who didn't learn Turkish in a year, though fortunately the law never passed.[194]

It's very significant, and almost always overlooked in scholarship, that this campaign actually preceded the *Law on the Adoption and Implementation of the Turkish Alphabet*, which was signed into law on November 1st, 1928 and went into effect on January 1st, 1929. Looking at

---

[190] Ibid.
[191] Senem Aslan. "'Citizen, Speak Turkish!': A Nation in the Making." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13.2 (2007): 245–272, p. 251.
[192] "Vatandaş ̧ Gözün Aydın," *Hizmet*, January 30, 1928. Quoted in and translated by Senem Aslan, "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" p. 243.
[193] *İkdam*, 19 May 1929, 11519.
[194] *Son Telgraf,* 6 İkinci Kanun 1938, (301). *Son Telgraf*, 11 İkinci Kanun 1938, (306).

the chronology of these discussions, it becomes clear that the reforms intertwined subsuming minority languages with converting everyone into proper citizens. The ethnic and linguistic nationalist sentiments preceding these reforms paved the groundwork for the exclusionary aspects of the reforms.

An unexpected example is found in the Jewish community. The community proclaimed that they were waiving their right to education in their own mother tongue so as to be able to become "proper" Turkish citizens. A fervent nationalist Turkish-Jew who himself adopted the Turkish name Tekin Alp wrote a new kind of ten commandments as the necessary prerequisite for this new belief system and for a full conversion:

> 1. Turkify your names / 2. Speak Turkish / 3. In the synagogue, recite at least some of the prayers in Turkish. / 4. Turkify your schools / 5. Send your children to public schools / 6. Take up public affairs / 7. Spend time with Turks / 8. Rip the communitarian spirit from its root / 9. Do your part in the economic sphere / 10. Know your rights[195]

A similar sentiment was voiced by another Jewish intellectual, Avram Galanti. Galanti at first vehemently argued against the transition to the Latin alphabet but later on defended the state's assimilationist policies. Galanti argued that the state's assimilationist demands were very legitimate. He also posited that assimilation should start with language and that education should play a key role so that in time minorities could forget their own native language and begin to speak the language of the countries, as the Jews did who were living in Bulgaria or Serbia.[196] He wrote,

> Those elements who live in Turkey and whose language is not Turkish . . . could be Turks by word, name, and officially. However, they cannot be Turks by soul, idea, and heart. Because they cannot feel

---

[195] Tekin Alp. *Türkleştirme*. Transcribed by Özer Ozankaya. İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000.
[196] Avram Galanti. *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş! Yahut Türkçe'nin Tamimi Meselesi*. İstanbul: Hüsn-ü Tabiat Matbaası, 1928.

Turkishness. Because they are lacking the Turkish [language], which is one of the factors that makes one feel Turkish.[197]

There were dissenting voices to the "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaign, as might be expected. These were not, however, defending the rights of the people who were being targeted by this campaign. In a newspaper article titled "Citizen, Don't Speak Turkish!," the issue was not that of justice but the author's contention that a Jew speaking Turkish was "not a favor" but "a rape of our most beautiful Turkish and our sweet accent."[198] Writing in the popular satire magazine of the time *Akbaba,* Orhan Seyfi Orhon echoed similar sentiments, saying, "don't you dare speak Turkish, false citizen! If one day we can't recognize you by your own essence, your appearance, we should [be able to] know you by your speech."[199] These statements encapsulate the "forbidding-forbidden" aspect of the monolingual paradigm that emphasizes the supposed foreignness of rightful citizens. Another interesting example is Celal Nuri Ileri, who compared imaginary citizens to argue who the ideal citizen would be:

> [Consider] Hasan Bey, originally from Damascus . . . had left his country [of origin] a long time ago. There is no fault with [his] language. He had married a woman outside of his hometown. [His] children were born in Üsküdar [a neighborhood in İstanbul] . . . . The neighbors do not consider them as foreigners. On the other hand . . . it is hard for the neighborhood not to consider one Hanna Efendi who is a Turkish citizen as a foreigner who stayed in Beyoğlu [a neighborhood in Istanbul], who has kept his Catholic faith, and Arabic language as a Christian and an Arab.[200]

In the same text he outlined the requirements for a model Turkish citizen:

---

[197] Translated in Bayar, Yeşim. *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. p. 50.

[198] Cevat Rifat Atilhan. *Milli Inkılâp*. July 1, 1934. Issue 5. Quoted in Rifat N. Bali, "Yahudilerin Türk Milliyetçiliği." *Birikim*, October 1997, Issue 102, p. 49.

[199] Orhan Seyfi Orhon, "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuşma!", *Akbaba*, August 1, 1940, Issue 341.

[200] Celal Nuri Ileri. *Devlet ve Meclis Hakkında Muhasebeler*. 1932. p. 95. Quoted in and translated by Yeşim Bayar. *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State*, 1920-1938. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. p.44.

> 1.Turkish should be the person's own language; he should speak Turkish with his family at home; he should think in Turkish; he should count in Turkish. He should talk in Turkish in his sleep. 2. Even though he could be a person who is indifferent to religion, or a non-believer, he should come from the Muslim roots, or he should convert to [Islam]. Particularly, his official religion should not be anything but Islam. 3. He should not have any characteristics of the yellow or the black races. 4. Ethnic origins are not a question here.[201]

The last, baffling quote sheds light on the paradoxical nature of the state's expectations from its citizens: atheism was fine as long as one at least tried Islam once, and one could reasonably expect to be integrated (or assimilated) as long as they didn't exhibit any of the "characteristics of the yellow or the black races" (mirroring the racial theories of the era). Therefore, it wouldn't be far-fetched to argue that being visibly or aurally different was a major detriment to full integration.

Conforming to and Resisting the Monolingual Paradigm: Martayan and Biberyan

Hagop Martayan/Agop Dilâçar and Zaven Biberyan attest to different kinds of "exilic consciousness." These two figures are very different in terms of their relationship with the state, and they experienced exile in ways that were radically different from the exilic figures who relocated to Istanbul from elsewhere, such as Erich Auerbach. They were also markedly different from each other. Focusing on figures like Martayan and Biberyan, who became exiles in their home but continued to be actively present in the public sphere (cf. Victor Klemperer, who spent years in hiding in Nazi Germany during WWII) affords important insights. Martayan and Biberyan each demonstrate different modes of belonging and mechanisms of resistance and integration. Martayan, in effect, became in charge of the language that was erasing his own

---

[201] Ibid.

mother tongue. Thus he reversed his conditions of exile by occupying a major position of power. At the same time, he continued to publish extensively about the Armenian language, literature, history, culture, and religious practices. It can be argued that he collaborated with and was indirectly responsible for a certain kind of erasure—although are no records that show what Martayan thought and believed regarding the role of the Turkish Republic in the continued violence towards the Armenians. On the other hand, Biberyan actively resisted the homogenizing and discriminatory policies of the Turkish state and defended the rights of minorities at the expense of his own precarity. This is in contrast to someone like Auerbach, about whom Leo Spitzer, Auerbach's predecessor in Istanbul and the person who recommended him for his position, thought that he lacked "a feeling of atavistic solidarity."[202]

Hagop Martayan (Agop Dilâçar) was born in Istanbul on May 22nd, 1895. He went to a Protestant primary school, where he learned English, Greek, and Spanish. For his high school education, he enrolled in the prestigious Robert College, where he started to learn Latin, ancient Greek, and German and also some Bulgarian and Russian from his foreign classmates. Two days after his graduation in 1915, he was conscripted to the army and sent to Diyarbakir. He was later diverted to the Caucasian Front, where he was wounded and awarded a medal. Then, with the outbreak of Armenian Genocide, he was relocated to Damascus as per protocol for Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army, it can be surmised.

It was on the Eastern Front that Martayan met Mustafa Kemal for the first time. On the road to Damascus in Aleppo, due to a misunderstanding, he was apprehended and taken to Kemal, the Fifth Army commander on the Eastern Front for questioning. The significance of the meeting lies in the fact that it was Martayan himself who first showed Kemal Turkish written

---

[202] Kader Konuk, *East West Mimesis,* p. 39.

with Latin letters, and he was possibly responsible for planting the seeds for the Alphabet Reform of 1928.[203] It must be emphasized that this is the way, with all the jumps in chronology, that Martayan told the story in a televised interview with the Turkish public broadcasting channel TRT. His son, Vahe Dilâçar, repeated it in a short essay he penned in 2002.[204] It's unclear, and Martayan certainly doesn't mention it himself, how much he knew about the Armenian Genocide as he was travelling southward, or what effect the Genocide had on his decision to relocate after the war.

It's also unclear whether it was a self-imposed exile that made Martayan leave Turkey for Sofia, Bulgaria to take up a teaching position after his marriage in Istanbul in 1920. But we know that he didn't have Turkish citizenship in Sofia, because he had to be issued a special document so that he could move back to Turkey and help Kemal prepare the language reforms. This happened because of Kemal's continued interest in Martayan's work and because of his impressive polyglotism.[205] For this said polyglotism, Martayan was chosen to represent Turkey in academic conferences and tasked to deliver speeches and lectures abroad. In this way he became the face of the Turkish language reform in the international arena. In essence, Martayan was chosen for his polyglotism to lead a project of monolingualism. Martayan's activities were not limited to his behind-the-scenes contributions to the standardization and purification efforts. He worked as a professor; In fact Martayan :was one of the many professors who continued to work as state functionaries despite the theoretical (though ambiguous) ban against non-Turks' becoming civil servants."[206]

---

[203] Kaya Türkay. *A. Dilâçar*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1982, pp. 13-16 & 45-61.
[204] Vahe Dilaçar. "Babam Agop Dilaçar." *Bütün Dünya*, 2002, pp. 26-27.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Lerna Ekmekçioğlu. *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. p. 121. Ekmekçioğlu also mentions that the "1926 'Law on Civil Servants' specified that 'being a Turk' was a primary criterion for eligibility to work as a civil servant. During parliamentary deliberations, 'the Turk' was defined as a non-Armenian and non-Greek citizen of Turkey" (195n56) This eerily

Martayan's public persona seems to be fully rooted in Kemalism. He is presented as the perfect role model for a minority citizen—even though throughout his life Martayan published various texts on Armenian history and culture in addition to his work on Turkish. The distinction of the public from the private persona is a piece of his exilic condition. Even in his semi-official biography published by the Turkish Language Institute, his Armenianness is effaced by shortening his Armenian first name in the title and throughout the preface. His own original surname was changed at Ataturk's suggestion in 1935. His new surname is itself significant. Dilâçar means "language opener" in Turkish. While he seemed very proud of the fact that the name "bestowed" upon him by Ataturk, this bestowal mirrors the 1934 Law of Surnames, which required Turkish citizens to adopt purely Turkish names and hints at another process of nationalist conversion. Tellingly, at different points in his life Martayan signed some of his works on Armenian history and culture with his original last name, Martayan. Still, Martayan remained an ardent supporter of Kemalist ideologies to the end of his life—even after Kemal's death and after Turkish language reform and its institutions lost most of their prestige.

Arguably, Martayan's most important work was his lectures in the first few Turkish Language Congresses. In those lectures Martayan laid much of the groundwork for the Sun-Language Theory. In the First Language Congress of 1932, he argued that Indo-European languages must have descended from Turkish. Martayan claimed that Turkish was related to Sumerian and thus to Indo-European languages. For example, Martayan connected the Turkish word "Alp" to the Gaelic-Celt word "Alp" and traces its history back to Albus, Albion, and so forth. In these lectures, the bulk of Martayan's presentation was reserved for presenting similarities of words, syntax and grammar between Turkish and various Indo-European

mirrors the conditions that Auerbach faced in Nazi Germany that prompted him to leave the country and come to Turkey.

languages with the ultimate goal of claiming that Turkish and the Turkish race was not related to the Mongols but to Indo-Europeans.

Later on, as the Sun-Language Theory was debunked, fell out of favor, and was ultimately ridiculed, Martayan produced scientifically grounded linguistic work. For example, *Türk Diline Genel Bir Bakış*[207] (A Cursory Glance at the Turkish Language) is a book-length survey on the historical linguistic development of Turkish with comprehensive bibliographical supplements. As a technical work, it's much less ideological. But Martayan also defended the goals and methods of the language reforms systemically throughout the years. In a lecture delivered at the 22nd International Congress of Orientalists in Istanbul in 1951, Martayan argued that at the time of the forefathers of the Seljuks, when they started infiltrating Western lands, Turkish was mostly free from foreign influence. But, Martayan noted, following the conversion to Islam, Arabic and Persian were adopted as the language of the Qur'an and science and the literary lingua franca of the Middle East, respectively: "Turkish had become the nutrient culture medium in which foreign organisms would propagate. One would say a second language was living within Turkish."[208] He argued that Turkish was infiltrated and taken over: the metaphor is eerily close to a viral or a parasitic infection. Martayan connected the westernization movement to "rationalism" and the "gradual growth of national self-consciousness"[209] and says that Turkish language reform was the linguistic equivalent of the abolition of class distinctions with the founding of the Turkish Republic. He also interestingly singled out Ziya Gökalp's "simplification" efforts, arguing that while Gökalp spearheaded many of the revolutionary linguistic ideas that were still in circulation at the time of his writing, he was simultaneously

---

[207] Agop Dilâçar. *Türk Diline Genel bir Bakış.* Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1964.
[208] Ibid., p. 23.
[209] Ibid.

"animated by the spirit of Islamic unity" and so relied heavily on Arabic instead of following a model of "returkification"—since he sometimes discarded Turkish words and tried to create words new words based on Arabic words and grammar.

In *Devlet Dili Olarak Türkçe*[210] (*Turkish as State Language*), a pamphlet first published in 1962, Martayan provides a historical survey of the status of Turkish as a state language throughout history starting with the Huns. The book mainly tracks the rise of the influence of Arabic and Persian and the relegation of Turkish to the background as the often overlooked and despised vernacular starting with the Ottoman Empire. He welcomes that in the 19th century Turkish was slowly becoming the official state language of the Empire, either without seeing or disregarding the implications of such a development for other languages of the Empire. His main focus seems to be squarely on Turkish itself and its direct linguistic relationship with other languages. Later on, he refers to the period between 1950 and 1960, the years when conservatives were in power, as a linguistic regression because of the resurrection of old Ottoman words. Incredibly, he names the 1960 coup d'état a "revolution," without acknowledging that it was in fact a coup and celebrates it because it resulted in a constitution full of pure Turkish words. The pamphlet ends with a section titled "Mother Tongue Consciousness." In this section, Martayan argues that while there are no pure languages without any foreign elements, every "fully healthy" language would endeavor to either get rid of these foreign elements or to reduce them as much as possible, because "a nation is not defined by blood but by language."[211] And perhaps unsurprisingly, Martayan doesn't consider the possibility that some citizens of Turkey have non-Turkish mother tongues and/or are bilingual.

---

[210] A. Dilaçar. *Devlet Dili Olarak Türkçe*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1962.
[211] Ibid., p. 24.

The "Mother Tongue Consciousness" section was expanded in another work titled *Mother Tongue Principles and Main Practices outside of Turkey*, which ultimately turned out to be Martayan's last work, published a year before his death in 1979. The above-mentioned quote is reproduced and this time actually attributed to the Grimm Brothers—as if the Grimm Brothers were members of the 1932 Turkish Linguistic Society. Martayan traces the intellectual heritage of mother tongue development to Dante, Luther, and Humboldt and proceeds to give examples from various countries in the world concerning the development and cultivation of native language practices and script issues. In this selective work, Martayan's erudition, breadth of knowledge, and use of sources is most impressive, though, curiously, his wide-ranging work doesn't mention Armenia and the Armenian language.

Even though traces of Armenian were curiously absent from his work for the Turkish state, this did not mean that Martayan had turned his back on the Armenian language and culture. In a speech he delivered in Bulgaria in 1931, Martayan professes a deep-seated love and admiration for the Armenian language. He celebrates its long history and connection to Christianity and positions it as one of the most beautiful, rich languages of the world:

> A secret that God shared with Mesrop and Yeznik as prophets of the Armenian language …. Yes, O native dialect, when I recall the inexhaustible sources of your wealth … you compete with literary masterpieces of the world—the Bible, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Racine, or Quixote—the world and its fullness opens before me.[212]

Martayan's belonging to the Turkish state is complicated, to say the least. He wasn't fully assimilated to the extent that he turned his back on Armenian language, culture and history—a move that was not unusual for Turkish Jewry, for example (in the case of Galanti and Tekin Alp,

---

[212] Quoted in *Համայնապատկեր Հանրակրթական Շրջանի Իթանպուլահայ Գրականութեան*. Edited by Արամեան Սանուց Միութիւն. Istanbul: Varol Basımevi, 2005.

as stated above) or for German-Jews, particularly Auerbach. Martayan, concurrent with his work on Turkish, continued to write on Armenian matters in Armenian for Armenian publications such as *Astarar, Jamanak,* and *Marmara*, producing a series of articles chronicling Armenian culture, history, and language from the 6th to the 18th century. But it is unclear how strong Martayan's own feeling of atavistic solidarity was. As stated before, there are no records of Martayan's reflections on his role in Turkish language reforms.

Zaven Biberyan

Biberyan's life, political activities, and journalistic and literary works are in complete contradistinction to Dilâçar's. Born in 1921 in Istanbul, Biberyan had to endure many challenges in the increasingly nationalist and anti-communist climate of mid-twentieth century Turkey. He was conscripted to the army in 1941 and served in the labor battalion (Nafia) for 42 months until 1945. Rober Koptaş writes that Biberyan deepened his knowledge of Armenian during that time and, following his horrible treatment at the camps, opted to stop writing short stories in French, which he learned in high school, and write instead in Armenian. This was a return to roots that the Armenian Genocide and the nationalist policies of the Turkish Republic were trying to efface. After his return to Istanbul, he started to work in prominent Armenian newspapers as a writer and editor. He caught the attention of the authorities after he published a series of critical articles on the discriminations against Armenians; he was prosecuted in 1946 and briefly imprisoned. This experience and continued harassment by the Turkish authorities over his journalistic work and politics prompted him to leave Turkey for Beirut in 1949. He was forced to return to Turkey in 1953 because of financial hardship. Financial hardships continued throughout

his life, and he had to resort to working odd jobs to survive, for example, as a salesman of undergarments, manufacturer of toys with his wife, etc. He was a socialist and active member of the Worker's Party. He received his party's nomination for the 1965 general elections though he wasn't elected. In 1968 he was elected to the Istanbul Municipal Assembly and became the vice president.

Two seminal events in the early 1940s affected Biberyan personally and served as important backdrops for his novels. First, in April 1941 non-Muslim men aged between 27 and 40 were conscripted for reserve military service (even if they have already served before). This was the reason for Biberyan's recruitment as well. The soldiers in the labor battalions were given brown uniforms that were reserved for the garbage collectors and sent to remote places to do physically intensive, extremely demanding construction work while receiving no pay. The horrible living conditions were coupled with epidemics—malaria was a major problem. But the labor battalions are mostly overshadowed by a much more scandalous affair: the infamous Wealth Tax, or Capital Tax [*Varlık Vergisi*]. Rifat Bali describes it thus: "It was originally conceived as a tool for taxing the extreme wealth being made through wartime profiteering and black market operations in Turkey during the Second World War. In practice, however, it was imposed in an arbitrary and discriminatory fashion, in essence representing a sort of 'economic warfare' carried out by the Turkish regime against the country's non-Muslim population."[213] The Prime Minister at the time, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, said as much: he described the law during closed sessions as one that would create a Turkish bourgeoisie. Although he refuted those claims in later years, explaining the need for the law arose from the fact that the law was meant to award loyal citizens of Turkey and punish those traitors who put their interest before the interests of the state.

---

[213] Rıfat N. Bali. *The Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) Affair; Documents From the British National Archives*. Libra: 2017.

Saraçoğlu claimed that if the law had not passed, the state would not have survived the brutal economic conditions of the wartime era.

In the implementation of Wealth Tax, however, the reality turned out to be quite different. Most non-Muslims had all of their assets appropriated by the state, and those who could not pay the exorbitant tax were sent to labor camps in Aşkale, Erzurum in Eastern Anatolia. The experience of the labor camps resembled the experience of the labor battalion, though even people much older than 40 were sent to the camps.

There are two historical parallels to the Wealth Tax and labor battalions. In 1856 the Ottoman Empire abolished *jizya*, a type of taxation that was levied on the non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state and replaced it with "baddal-i askari" [military substitution], a formidable annual tax for non-Muslim subjects who wished to be exempt from the mandatory military service. Those who couldn't pay the fee/tax were conscripted. It's easy to recognize the hypocrisy that lies at the foundation of the Wealth Tax. It was very problematic for a government that prided itself on being secular, Western, and fundamentally different from the Ottoman Empire to promulgate a law that discriminated against its citizens on the basis of their religion and ethnicity.

The second semblance is a contemporary one. Recep Maraşlı[214] and Rıfat Bali[215] discovered that two high ranking officials of the Turkish National Police visited the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in 1943. This state sponsored trip was described in official state documents as a "professional observational visit." The visit was approved by Himmler, and the Turkish officials were given a tour of the camp. Much is still unclear about this encounter. And while the visit was after the Wealth Tax and the labor battalion ordeals had already been

---

[214] Recep Maraşlı. "Varlık Vergisi ve Aşkale'nin mimarları Nazilerden ders almış." *Agos* [Istanbul]. 10 March 2012.
[215] Rifat Bali. "Sachsenhausen Temerküz Kampı'nın Türk Ziyaretçileri." *Toplumsal Tarih* vol. 22, no. 151, 38-43.

implemented, the fact that one of these officials became the governor of the city where the labor battalions were located shows that these events weren't entirely unrelated. When the officials returned to Turkey, they brought with them the bones of Talat Pasha, the main architect of the Armenian Genocide. It's also ironic that while Turkey was sending people to concentration camps on an official visit, Biberyan went to jail when he wrote an article in which he vehemently opposed the rumor that Armenians were working in tandem with the Nazis. In "Enough is Enough," he stated in his most famous article, which appeared in the Armenian newspaper *Nor Lur* on 5 January 1946. Biberyan asks, "are we equal citizens of Turkish Republic or people with a temporary residency permit? Are we free and equal citizens or people whom they (journalists) have the right to talk about condescendingly, often with a domineering and threatening tone?"[216]

In this framework, Biberyan's novels are especially noteworthy because they fuse together his socialist politics and Armenian background. Following his ideological orientation, he produced works that were informed by social realism and explored the devastation caused by the state that targeted the non-Muslim communities of the Turkish Republic. But Biberyan's social realist style brings another dimension into the fold: his focus is on the economic devastation that upper class non-Muslims experienced. As such, his work is critical of both the arbitrary, racist nature of these destructive events and also of the material fixations and obsessions of the people who were unjustly targeted.

His first novel, *Impudent* [Լկրտածը] was published in Armenian in Istanbul in 1959. It was translated to Turkish by the author and published as *Yalnızlar* [*Lonely Ones*] in 1966. It is set in 1953 in an upper-class neighborhood in Istanbul and the island of Prinkipos, a location for

---

[216] Zaven Biberyan, "Al Ge Pawe," *Nor Lur*, 5 January 1946. Translated and quoted in Talin Suciyan. *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics, and History.* London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016.

summer homes. Biberyan dissects the inter-class and inter-ethnic relationships and looks at how family ties, friendships, and love interests are developed along these lines. The novel tells the complicated, intertwined stories of several households, though in the end they all converge on two acts of violence: a sexual crime targeting a Turkish woman and a hate crime targeting a young Armenian man, while the perpetrators are both young Turkish men. The maid of a Turkish household, Gülgün, who is arguably the protagonist, is ultimately brutally killed by the neighborhood butcher after she rebuffs and makes fun of his continued sexual advances. Although she was adopted as a child by the family she works for, in essence she provides free labor in an extremely exploitative and hostile environment. She sees her sexuality as a way of escaping the brutal conditions she is operating in to attain a better life, but she is labelled with sexually pejorative terms by the Armenian neighbors next door. The violent hate crime is perpetrated by a group of neighborhood Turkish kids headed by Erol, whose family employs the maid. The victim is Aret, a popular young Armenian man who plays basketball in an important team and dates a girl that Erol is secretly in love with. Erol's wish to be the group leader, his jealousy of Aret's popularity and his feeling of frustration with Aret's relationship result in a violent racist attack: he and his friends ambush Aret and beat him to death. The novel ends shortly after the crimes are committed.

The *Impudent* is the only one of Biberyan's novels that features a plethora of Turkish characters, and through these characters, Biberyan sheds light on forms of oppression that are visible in daily life and in interpersonal relationships as there are no directly voiced criticisms concerning the Turkish state and the recent history. Thus, the Turkish characters' animosity towards Armenians and other non-Muslims functions as a stand-in for the broader society. Language becomes an important element in this representational strategy. There novel is riddled

130

with instances when Armenian characters immediately switch to speaking to Turkish whenever they encounter Turkish people they don't know or feel that they can be overheard by others and chastised for not speaking Turkish.

In one instance, in a discussion between Turkish characters about their non-Muslim neighbors, Armenians are contrasted to Greeks, as "they are unlike the Greeks; ostensibly these people speak Turkish at home too." But this is seen to be merely posturing, and one person prefers when they, the non-Muslims, are "authentic." Additionally, Aret's command of Turkish without a foreign accent unnerves Erol, who feels that Aret fits in too well and is therefore less susceptible to ridicule and torment.

Biberyan's second novel, *Penniless Lovers*,[217] first published in Istanbul in 1962, mirrors the themes of Biberyan's first and third novels" sexual repression and frustration, patriarchy, intrafamily dynamics, class struggles within the Armenian community and in the broader society, Turkey's treatment of Armenians and other non-Muslim communities, and so on. In this novel the cast of characters and the scope of interactions is very limited. The novel, using deep, sustained internal monologues, takes place over the course of a week and is mostly confined to the interior space of a house.

Set in 1960 or 1961, the plot of the novel is quite simple: Sur and Norma are two young lovers of Armenian origin living in Istanbul. The main protagonist, Sur, is almost 20 years old while Norma is a few years older than him. Sur was born in 1940 or 1941, right before his father, Kevork, was forcibly conscripted to the army. Kevork had come to Istanbul from the provinces after the Genocide, and there he married Meline. Sur has two younger siblings, Silva and Hagopig. Sur and Norma usually go to the Princes' Islands off the coast of Istanbul on the

---

[217] Zaven Biberyan. *Անկուտի Սիրահարները* (Penniless Lovers). Istanbul: To Yayinlari, 1962. Turkish translation: Zaven Biberyan. *Meteliksiz Aşıklar*. Istanbul: Aras Yayincilik, 2019.

weekends and return to their respective houses in the evenings. One day they have an argument when Sur gets jealous, and neither of them makes an attempt to reach out for six days. During those six days, Sur's resentment towards his family grows constantly. In the end, Sur reaches out to Norma and they go back to the one of the islands where they talk about their future prospects and try to chart the best course of action.

The shadow of past violence and the threat of a recurrence looms large. The Armenian Genocide is not directly mentioned, but the Holocaust is alluded to. Norma's family had escaped Greece under Nazi Occupation. Her mother's rumored to be Greek, but this is never confirmed by Norma, and Sur never asks. Norma still vividly remembers the time when they escaped Athens: "I've seen such things in Piraeus, before I boarded a ship. Also before that, I remember. … That hill leads to the Acropolis. We used to live there in an old house. I remember that much. One day Nazis killed a girl and a man there. They were *partisan*s probably. I watched it. … The corpses in Piraeus too." As opposed to his first and third novels, in this work, the threat of violence is more personal and happens for sexual reasons. Towards the very end of the novel, when Sur and Norma are almost attacked by a man, the man cautiously asks whether Sur is a Jew, as he is looking for a specific Jewish man. It turns out that this man is not after that Jewish person because he's Jewish; it's insinuated that the Jewish man had humiliated him when he was with his girlfriend.

As the title suggests, Sur and Norma, are penniless lovers. Sur's still in high school and isn't working. His father refuses to give him an adequate allowance on the grounds that he is still reeling from financial hardship when his store was looted during the riots and killings of the September 1955 (known as *6-7 Eylül Olayları* in Turkish, and as *Σεπτεμβριανά* in Greek). Norma, having lost her father, is working full-time to support herself and her mother after

dropping out of high school.

Among Biberyan's oeuvre of three novels, *Penniless Lovers* is the one that clearly demonstrates the demarcated language regimes at play. As mentioned above, Sur mainly interacts with only Norma and his family members. It's clear that Sur speaks in Armenian with both Norma and his family members at all times.

Since Sur and Norma can only meet outside, in public, their act of speaking in Armenian in public becomes important. While they're in line for a ferry ticket, for example, it's noted that "Norma was speaking in a hushed voice like whenever she spoke Armenian in public. She spoke Armenian clearly." The significance of this act becomes apparent later on in the novel. When thinking about his father, Sur gets incensed when he contrasts his father, Kevork's, emphasis at home on the importance of the Armenian community and the church and his imposition of Armenian values on his children, with his berating his children to "Speak Turkish! Speak Turkish!" in public.

Speaking Turkish well in public is indeed important. The most significant scenes vis-a-vis language are the ones which feature speaking Turkish. Sur despises Kevork's heavily accented Turkish and believes himself to be superior because of his accent-less Turkish, among many other reasons. In two highly charged scenes, Sur's command of Turkish saves him. When he is accosted by a municipal worker for jumping over some guard rails, he is treated well because his Turkish is seen as a marker of higher education and social status — he's still treated with respect even after he's forced to give his name and thus disclose his Armenianness. In the above-mentioned final scene, when Sur and Norma are almost attacked by a voyeur, the would-be attacker is convinced that Sur can't be Jewish because of his speech.

While all speech acts seem to be in Armenian at home, Kevork and Meline are both

unhappy that their children are reading Turkish books, newspapers, and magazines, but for different reasons. For Kevork, the problem is that reading Turkish material means that their private space is being invaded by things that are not related to the Armenian community, something that Kevork desperately wants to convey to his children as he is aspiring to become a leading figure in the community. Therefore, at some point, he chastises his children by shouting, "Rather than reading these stupid things day and night, read some serious things. Read Armenian, Armenian! At least read the paper!" But in response, his children ridicule him by listing all the boring things in the Armenian newspaper. In another scene, Hagopig opens the paper and acts as if he is reading it aloud but instead of reading from it, he makes up the stories, ultimately demonstrating the redundancy of the community news and thus embarrassing Kevork. Meline, on the other hand, considers Sur's habit of reading books in Turkish as an extension of Norma's undue influence on him, which she blames for Sur's increasingly rude behavior towards Kevork and herself: "Who is giving those Turkish books to Sur? Certainly that girl. Maybe Sur was learning such things from those books."

Biberyan's third and last novel, *The Twilight of the Ants* was first serialized in the Armenian daily *Jamanak* in 294 days in 1970 and was published in book form shortly before his death in 1984.[218] Set in the aftermath of World War II, it tells the story of the Armenian Tarhanyan family that is thrown into chaos by the Wealth Tax and the conscription of the family's son to the labor battalion. The novel begins with Baret's *nostos* and with a darkly inverted reimagining of the *Odyssey*'s conclusion: Baret's mother fails to recognize his son when she first sees him returning, riddled with lice, from not a grand adventure but from a labor battalion service, where his exploits were akin to slave labor.

---

[218] It was translated to Turkish in 1998, as *Babam Askale'ye Gitmedi* [*My Father did not go to Aşkale*] and a French translation titled *Le Crépuscule des Fourmis* appeared in 2012.

In addition to the immediate Tarhanyan family, the novel has two characters that are in complete contradistinction to each other: Suren, a distant maternal relative, and Dirtad, Baret's paternal uncle. They both illustrate how lives may be deeply shaped by economic decisions taken. Suren became rich by the same measures that tried to curtail wartime profiteering. One of his friends trusts him with the safekeeping of his secretly stashed wares that he managed to hide from the authorities before going to Aşkale, the site of the labor camps. Suren sells these wares at an immense profit and shares the profits based on a much lesser price. In the last chapter, we see Suren as a parliamentary candidate and a very important figure of the community while still getting richer from illegal backroom deals. On the other hand, Dirtad lives in the now decrepit family mansion in Prinkipos, the largest island off the coast of Istanbul, having quit his job in a Western company because of his disappointment with what he calls the "system." He lives off the land and sells the fish that he catches daily in the Island's market. He explains his (non)philosophy as one of disinterestedness and being disgusted by the ambition and obsession with material possessions in the city life. He thinks that a life is only worth living if it's lived to the fullest on the edge, on the extremes and outside of the pre-established norms. It is Dirtad who both finds a job for Baret but also makes snide remarks about his conformity, which ultimately results in Baret's quitting of the said job and finding another one as a simple worker in a factory. Dirtad dies destitute and alone. His corpse is discovered a week after his death, and when Baret visits the house several weeks later he is overwhelmed by the lingering foul stench of his corpse.

It is significant that Biberyan withholds criticizing the state outright in the beginning of the novel and saves it for later. Instead of blaming the state, he opts for a trope of inter-familial conflict: the mother and the sister place the blame for the Tarhanyans' economic downfall squarely on the father's shoulders. But later, this idea gets increasingly more complex forms of

treatment. Even the conniving Suren, who took advantage of other people's desperation during the Wealth Tax and seemingly has no qualms about collaborating with Turkish authorities to appropriate other people's wealth, at a rare moment tells Baret that even if they were to escape Turkey for Armenia, they would need money to do so. More importantly, there's literally not much one can do as a second-class citizen except make money. Suren tells Baret:

> It's not your country son. They're telling you that you don't belong to this country. If it were yours, you'd go to school, become a scholar, a civil servant, a professor. They won't even let you become a garbageman, a garbageman! If you don't have money, you have nothing .... [They say] you're not one of us, you're a foreigner, you don't have the right.[219]

More importantly, as opposed to similar work from Turkish writers, Biberyan makes the unresolved linguistic tensions explicit. In his works he problematizes speech in crucial ways: some of the non-Muslim characters who were forcibly displaced from Anatolia to Istanbul share the same speech patterns and accents as the conservative nouveau rich Muslim bourgeoisie who voluntarily moved to Istanbul for greater business opportunities—as in the example of Suren, Keçeli and others. Language in that sense becomes a marker of class identity rather than a marker of mode of belonging to an ethnic or a religious group.

Furthermore, it crisscrosses ethnic and religious borders and attests that neither a complete integration nor a perfect linguistic demarcation has been attained, possibly much to the state's chagrin. This is further problematized by the fact that different non-Muslims characters are able to swiftly and deftly code-switch when they are interacting with characters from different non-Muslim communities. Biberyan's fictional works bear witness to the remnants of multilingualism in these small encounters. In a particularly poignant exchange between Turkish

---

[219] Biberyan, 2020, p. 86.

characters speaking about their Armenian neighbors, Armenians are differentiated from Greeks because "unlike Rums they speak Turkish at home"; but even that is met with skepticism and denial, and they are also labelled as infidels [gavur].

Furthermore, in *The Dusk of the Ants*, the protagonist Baret has a doomed love affair with Lula, the daughter of the Greek family whose extra room he's renting. The use of language is particularly poignant for this relationship. Baret and Lula have to resort to speaking Turkish to communicate with each other. When Baret remembers Alfred de Vigny's 1843 poem "La Mort du loup," he translates the poem to Turkish for Lula. A lower-class worker living almost in squalor while caring for her ailing mother, Lula is still effectively bilingual, and unlike many other rich and/or powerful non-Turks her command of Turkish seems to be exemplary and without a discernible accent. She also states that while she's effectively illiterate, she still knows "the stories of Paris, Helen, Homer …. Priamos."[220] Yet they are surrounded by a multilingual neighborhood. In one example, during New Year's Eve, many languages trickle in, a single children's choir sings in different languages: "Twenty meters down the road 'ke to hronu' [sic. και του χρόνου] became "Happy New Year" in Armenian."[221] The role of language for the intimacy between Baret and Lula becomes most visible when Baret, in his attempt to be affectionate, resorts to using Greek words and figures of speech. In one instance, while trying to soothe Lula, he mistakenly uses the masculine form of the Greek word for crazy (τρελός) and Lula is both touched by the gesture and also feels good about herself when she is finally in a position to correct him, even though Greek is not Baret's own native language and Lula's knowledge of Armenian seems to be non-existent.

---

[220] Biberyan, *The Dusk of the Ants,* p. 208.
[221] Ibid., p. 222.

It's important to note that in Biberyan's fictional works, there's absolutely no sense of hostility towards the Turkish language. Instead, the discriminatory events, practices, and discourses that are targeted. The novel ends on September 3, 1955, three days before the Istanbul riots (*Σεπτεμβριανά*) when mobs attacked all non-Muslim minorities and resulted in the mass exodus of Greek citizens of Turkey. The shadow of the camps for minorities during both the first and second World Wars also looms large. Nicos Poulantzas suggests that "[c]amps are the form of shutting up non-nationals (or, more precisely, 'anti-nationals') within the national territory. They internalize the frontiers of the national space at the heart of that space itself, thus making possible the modern notion of 'internal enemy.'"[222] The camps in Biberyan's books anticipate the postwar conversion of non-Muslim minorities as Turkey's internal enemy.

It is this logic of conversion, whether in the form of full assimilation or a process of alienation and antagonism that Biberyan is targeting and insists on writing an Armenian form of resistance. With tensions brewing in Cyprus in 1955, Baret has a moment of epiphany: He sees the Armenian psyche as plagued by peace, which Armenians see as unnatural and expect the worst. He sees this as collective masochism. He thinks that Armenians are surrendering their fates over to people who won't change it for the good or will outright change it for the worse, and this act of surrendering is a form of suicide. Even though the Armenians have survived Abdulhamid II and the Committee of Union and Progress and will ultimately survive the Republican People's Party of the Turkish Republic, the Armenians' problems are without a viable solution and a path forward. Instead, Biberyan writes that some will actually accumulate wealth and power, but this has its own share of ethical conundrums. This is precisely what Baret realizes towards the end of the narrative:

---

[222] Nicos Poulantzas. *State, Power, Socialism*. London: Verso, 2000, p. 105.

Yesterday [Wealth Tax], today Cyprus, tomorrow something else. But definitely a "disaster" that will "explode in our faces." This is what bothered him …. All those years, he had forgotten what it means to be Armenian, without a doubt. Now he began to remember and understand what that meant. Involuntarily, he was taking up an Armenian identity again. … He was realizing that it was better to "not be Armenian." But it was impossible to be not Armenian.

In his novelistic works Biberyan's critique of the Turkish state and legacy of the destruction of the Armenian people, history, culture, and language is subtle. But in his posthumously and only very recently published autobiography,[223] written entirely in French, Biberyan lays bare how his politics was shaped. Biberyan was appalled by the way the Turkish state was treating Armenians, and especially by how in Turkish newspapers Armenians were portrayed. Biberyan mentions that as a 17–18-year-old, he wrote a letter to Muhittin Birgen, who "couldn't keep himself from taunting Armenians for even a week." Muhittin Birgen was a parliamentarian in both the Ottoman and Turkish cabinets and was also the editor-in-chief of the important Ottoman newspaper *Tanin.* While sadly Biberyan's original letter did not survive, Birgen's response did.[224] Titled, "Ermeniler için Selamet Yolu" ["The Road to Safety/Security for Armenians"], in his response, Birgen aggrandizes Turks and belittles Armenians. Erroneously believing Biberyan's anonymous letter to be written by an old reader, because of the letter writer's "clean Turkish" and familiarity with Birgen's articles from 1917, Birgen mentions that while the person who wrote the letter doesn't see himself as a friend to Turks, he believes that the number of Armenians who didn't consider Turks as their friends was decreasing day by day, while Turks waited with a kind of patience that only "a nation which fortified and determined their historical

---

[223] Zavèn Bibérian. *Car vivre, c'était se battre et faire l'amour.* Ed. Hérve Georgelin. Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2019.
[224] Biberyan notes that Birgen's reponse was published in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet,* but based on all the details that Biberyan supplies and the content of Birgen's response, I'm fairly certain that Birgen's response was published in *Son Posta* on June 20th, 1938.

existence by shedding floods of blood" would have. It is easy to see how Biberyan's politics was shaped in relation to Turkish discourse.

Biberyan also took umbrage with many other fellow Armenian journalists because "whenever the Turkish press made an infamous accusation, a threat against the Armenians, [Armenian] newspapers were only jerking out and repeating the catchphrase of the Armenian-who-rendered-invaluable-services-to-the-communal-homeland" instead of standing their ground and publishing authentic responses. Biberyan writes that he preferred "to be hated, and not despised or disdained; be an adversary, not an asslicker"[225]

In his autobiography, Biberyan notes that until he matured, met Turkish people from all walks of life, and embraced socialism, he was feeling a deep-seated hatred towards Turks, and he didn't consider himself to be part of the Turkish society much later. But he also chronicles how his journalism defending the rights of Armenians, which ultimately led to his imprisonment, also unsettled the prominent members of the Armenian journalistic circles in Istanbul. In his time of need, he was left to defend for himself, and that arguably constituted the major shift in his thinking about the Armenian community of Istanbul.

Biberyan was alienated from both the Turkish state because of its policies and the broader Armenian community because of their perceived greed and their complicity with the Turkish state. At the end of his life, he regretted writing in Armenian and wrote that he should have written in French. It's unclear why exactly he thought so; it could have been because he would have had a broader audience or maybe simply because he wanted to do nothing with neither Turkish nor Armenian.

---

[225] Biberyan, *Karıncaların Günbatımı,* p. 686.

Conclusion

Biberyan and Martayan represent vestiges of a multilingual Istanbul. What is at stake in bringing them into the practice of comparative literature is that their presence attests to a different kind of multilingualism from the one given in the by now canonical story of the discipline. Their differences are also significantly important and illustrate a certain complexity that would benefit the discipline as well. Martayan voluntarily collaborated with nationalist policies and became responsible for strengthening the hegemonic discourses to the detriment of others. But the fact that he became crucial for the purity of a language, which wasn't necessarily his mother tongue, or rather his only one, also hints at the ways in which Martayan subverted the monolingual aspects of the language reform. Biberyan, on the other hand, chose to write in a language with a limited readership, one that was deemed as uncouth and was being openly repressed.

These two figures do not merely complement each other to form a cohesive whole of Armenian, but rather Western Armenian's continued existence destabilizes the supposed intactness and purity of the Turkish language. In addition, figures like these present alternatives to comparative literature's ongoing struggle with the foundational status of the exile. Gayatri Spivak notes that:

> Comparative Literature can also find its own unacknowledged prehistory in this sector, and thus do a long-range historical revision of the record of its apparently European provenance. Muslim Europe and Arabic–Persian cosmopolitanism have both been abundantly studied in Middle Eastern studies and comparative history. Because of the special nature of Comparative Literature, we, on the other hand, have spent considerable energy on Leo Spitzer and Erich Auerbach in Turkey, as if they were explorers for the cause of literary criticism.[226]

---

[226] Gayatri C. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline.* Columbia University Press, 2003, p. 78.

As the discipline of comparative literature finds itself in a moment of crisis and tries to find relevance in a world that is trying to reconcile the gap between the global and local, cosmopolitan configurations such as the one we see in Istanbul deserve further inquiry. In this respect, reevaluating the notion of "exilic consciousness" with unidealized attention to the so-called margins seems to be of utmost importance for comparative literature. Istanbul of the early Republican period, with or without Auerbach, offers a very valuable comparative framework, within its own context and also, more importantly, vis-a-vis Europe. It unsettles preconceived notions of a merely binary linguistic opposition within a language reform, and it also shows that a minor language itself is fragmented and is in constant flux and struggle not only with the dominant language but also with itself.

Conclusion

In this present study I attempted to show how ethno-nationalism inflects language reform efforts undertaken by multilingual communities in the Ottoman Empire. As a result, language becomes a site of nationalist politics, and a seminal tool of inclusion and exclusion. Each of my chapters uncover a different facet of this process. The first chapter shows how canonical Greek texts, written by people who were born as Ottoman subjects, were infused with different political orientations and how they grappled with a rising national linguistic philology and their place within the framework of Ottoman and Greek states. The second chapter demonstrates how an Islamist conservative poet both contributed to and resisted the Turkish Language Reform project, which was tied to Turkish nationalist efforts to efface Persian and Arabic influence in language and other domains and thus subsuming Islam. The third chapter reveals another aspect of the Turkish Language Reform, that the creation and imposition of an official and national language meant a total disenfranchisement of speakers of other languages. As the last chapter of the dissertation, it also shows how the rise of national languages resulted in a disastrous dissolution of a precious co-existence of peoples from different religious, political, social, cultural, and linguistic belongings in the Turkish case.

Today, comparative literary studies, with their emphasis on the concept of world literature—which itself is part of a broader socio-political trend towards being more inclusive of hitherto overlooked, ignored and even actively repressed and silenced peoples and their histories, languages, and literatures—places a heavy emphasis on translation and re-evaluating national

canons of literature. Yet trying to carve out a space for the multilingual literatures of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Literature is no easy task; this attempt unavoidably produces new, perhaps more brittle fault-lines when faced with epistemological and methodological problems with which comparative literature as a field is largely unfamiliar. Following Vangelis Kechriotis's warnings concerning Ottoman cosmopolitanism, my intention is neither to argue that we should "place the Ottoman Empire on a par with the major European colonial empires of the era, claiming in scholarship what the Ottomans themselves never managed to achieve in politics" nor to approach it "from the point of view of the alleged subaltern, building on an old-fashioned perception of the center–periphery debate and an understanding of the Turkish nature of the Ottoman bureaucracy which reiterates similar perceptions inherited from Arab nationalism."[227] But by focusing on the debates surrounding multilingualism and monolingualism, it can be argued that the transformation of the Ottoman and Turkish language practices are intertwined with discussions of cultural and political belonging of the different communities of the empire and they introduced new sets of rights and ideas as well as new senses of belonging.

One of the major goals when I embarked on this project was to decouple the seemingly continuous histories of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic in order to re-evaluate not only the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into the Turkish Republic but also to be able to divert attention to social dynamics, political movements, ideologies, and geographical spaces that are often overlooked in this transformation. In his analysis of Ziya Pasha's anthology, *Harabat*, C. Ceyhun Arslan observes that while Ziya Pasha characterized the Ottoman language "as an 'ocean' that encompasses Arabic, Persian, and Turkish 'streams,'" this oceanic feeling didn't extend to other languages such as "Armenian or Kurdish [and] did not shape the cultural

---

[227] Vangelis Kechriotis. "Postcolonial Criticism Encounters Late Ottoman Studies" *Historein,* no. 13, 2013, pp. 39-46, p. 43.

reservoir that the elite Ottoman men of letters identified with."[228] Again, for a true re-conceptualization of literatures and histories of the Ottoman and Turkish states, we need a more inclusive approach that doesn't solely focus on "Turkish" elements and historical figures that created the conditions of such systems of exclusion. In my dissertation project I tried to show how even the monolingual paradigm is essentially about negotiating multiethnic, multiconfessional, multinational, and multilingual conditions, and thus should be analyzed beyond the boundaries that a nation sets for itself.

While this study aims to brings seemingly distant but intrinsically linked and hitherto overlooked histories, ideas, cultures, and languages together, it is far from being in any way exhaustive. Sadly, it leaves out many examples from texts in Arabic, Bulgarian, Kurdish, Ladino, Persian, and other languages of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. There is an incredibly rich tapestry buried under the ruins of history; I know others will continue to uncover it.

---

[228] C. Ceyhun Arslan. "Canons as Reservoirs: The Ottoman Ocean in Ziya Pasha's Harabat and Reframing the History of Comparative Literature." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2017, pp. 731–748, p. 733.

Bibliography

Alexiou, Margaret. "Why Vizyenos?" *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1995, pp. 289-298.

Abdul-Raof, Hussein. *Qur'an Translation: Discourse, Texture and Exegesis*. Routledge, 2001.

Adak, Hülya. "Introduction: Exiles at Home-Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies." *PMLA,* vol. 123, no. 1, 2008, pp. 20-26.

Ahmed, Shabab. *What is Islam: The Importance of Being Islamic.* Princeton University Press, 2017.

Alp, Tekin. *Türkleştirme*. Transcription, Özer Ozankaya. İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000.

And, Metin. *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908).* Ankara, Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1972.

Anidjar, Gil. "Secularism." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2006, pp. 52–77.

Antaramian, Richard E. *Brokers of Faith, Brokers of Empire: Armenians and the Politics of Reform in the Ottoman Empire*. Stanford University Press, 2020.

Akdemir, Salih. *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Kur'ân Tercümeleri: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım*. Ankara: Akid Yayıncılık, 1989.

Altuntaş, Halil. *Kur'an'ın tercümesi, ve tercüme ile namaz meselesi.* Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1998.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. W. W. Norton &
Company, 2010.

Apter, Emily. *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. Princeton and Oxford:
Princeton University Press, 2011.

——. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*. New York and London,
Verso Book, 2014.

Armağan, Mustafa. *Türkçe Ezan ve Menderes: Bir Devrin Yazılamayan Gerçekleri*. Istanbul,
Timaş, 2010.

Arnakis, George G. "Turanism: An Aspect of Turkish Nationalism." *Balkan Studies,* no. 1, 1960,
pp. 19–3.

Arsal, Sadri Maksudi, *Türk Dili İçin*. Ankara, Tük Ocakları İlim ve Sanat Heyeti Nesriyatı, 1930.

Arslan, C. Ceyhun. "Canons as Reservoirs: The Ottoman Ocean in Ziya Pasha's Harabat and
Reframing the History of Comparative Literature." *Comparative Literature Studies*, vol.
54, no. 4, 2017, pp. 731–748.

Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and
Islam.* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

——. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford University Press,
2003.

——. *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason*. Columbia
University Press, 2018.

Aslan, Senem. " 'Citizen, Speak Turkish!': a Nation in the Making." *Nationalism and Ethnic
Politics,* vol. 13, no. 2, 2007, pp. 245–272.

Aslanian "Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites: Abbot Mkhitar's 1727 Armeno-Turkish
Grammar for Vernacular Western Armenian," *Journal for the Society of Armenian
Studies*, vol. 25, 2017, pp. 54 –86.

Atik, Necmi. *Mehmed Akif Ersoy'un Kur'an Meali: Akif'in kendi el yazısıyla iki cüzlük meali.*
İstanbul, Büyüyenay Yayınları, 2016.

Ayoub, Mahmoud. "Translating the Meanings of the Qur'an: Traditional Opinions and Modern
Debates" *Afkar/Inquiry*, vol. 3, no. 5, 1986, pp. 34–39.

Aytürk, İlker. "Script Charisma in Hebrew and Turkish: a Comparative Framework for
Explaining Success and Failure of Romanization." *Journal of World History,* vol. 21, no.
1, 2010, pp. 97–130.

——-. "Turkish Linguists Against the West: the Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk's
Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies,* vol. 40, no. 6, 2004, pp. 1–25.

——. "The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: the Language Council
From 1926 to 1931." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 18 no. 03, 2008, pp. 275–
293.

Ayvazoğlu, Beşir. 'Etimolojik Türkçülük: Türk Tarih Tezi ve Güneş-Dil Teorisi'nin Ön Tarihi',
Muhafazakâr Düşünce, no.5, 2005, pp. 29–42.

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R
Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

——. "Letter to Johannes Oeschger," May 27, 1938, Nachlass Fritz Lieb, Universitätsbibliothek
Basel (Handschriftenabteilung), NL 43 (Lieb) Ah 2,1.

——. "Scholarship in Times of Extremes: Letters of Erich Auerbach (1933-46), on the Fiftieth

 Anniversary of His Death." Introduction and translation by Martin Elsky, Martin Vialon,

 and Robert Stein. *PMLA,* vol. 122, no. 3, 2007, pp. 742–762.

Bali, Rıfat N. "Yahudilerin Türk Milliyetçiliği." Istanbul, *Birikim*, October 1997, Issue 102.

Bardakjian, Kevork. *The Mekhitarist Contributions to Armenian Culture and Scholarship*.

 Cambridge, Harvard College Library, 1976.

——. *Hagop Baronian's Political and Social Satire*. 1979. Oxford U, Ph.D. Dissertation.

——. *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500-1920: with an Introductory*

 History. Wayne State University Press, 2000.

——. "Ottoman Servants, Armenian Lords: The Rise of Amiras." *Journal of the Society for*

 Armenian Studies, vol. 26, 2017, pp. 17-38.

——. "The Rise of Modern, and Modern Western, Armenian: A Cursory Glance."

 (forthcoming).

Barsoumian, Hagop L. *The Armenian Amiras of the Ottoman Empire*. Yerevan, American

 University of Armenia, 2006.

Baş, Elif. "The Role of Armenians in Establishing Western Theatre in the Ottoman Empire."

 Asian Theatre Journal, vol. 37, no. 2, 2020, pp. 442-463.

Bali, Rıfat N. *The Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) Affair; Documents From the British National*

 Archives. Libra: 2017.

——. "Sachsenhausen Temerküz Kampı'nın Türk Ziyaretçileri." *Toplumsal Tarih* vol. 22, no.

 151, pp. 38-43.

Bayar, Yeşim. *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Beaton, Roderick. *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature*. Clarendon Press & Oxford

    University Press, 1999.

——. "Imagining a Hellenic Republic, 1797–1824: Rigas, Korais, Byron." *Comparative Critical*

    Studies, vol. 15, no. 2, 2018, pp. 169-182.

Beaton, Roderick, and David Ricks, editors. *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism,*

    Romanticism, & the Uses of the Past (1797-1896). Ashgate, 2009.

Benhabib, Seyla. *Another Cosmopolitanism*. Ed. Robert Post. Oxford & New York, Oxford

    University Press, 2006.

Biberyan, Zaven. "Al Ge Pawe," *Nor Lur*, 5 January 1946.

——. Անկումի Սիրահարները (Penniless Lovers). Istanbul: To Yayinlari, 1962.

——. *Karıncaların Günbatımı*. Translated by Sirvart Malhasyan. Istanbul, Aras Yayincilik,

    2019.

——. Մրջիւններու վերջալոյսը. Istanbul, Aras Yayincilik, 2007.

——. *Ծովը*. Istanbul, Aras Yayincilik, 2017.

——. *Meteliksiz Aşıklar.* Translated by Natali Bağdat. Istanbul, Aras Yayincilik, 2019.

——. *Yalnızlar.* Istanbul, Aras Yayincilik, 2020.

Bibérian, Zavèn. *Car vivre, c'était se battre et faire l'amour,* edited and translated by Hérve

    Georgelin. Istanbul, Aras Yayıncılık, 2019.

Birgen, Muhittin. "Ermeniler için Selamet Yolu." *Son Posta*. June 20th, 1938.

Bilgrami, Akeel. *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment*. Harvard University Press, 2014.

Branouses, L. I. "Ideologikes Zymoseis kai Sygkrouseis" (Ideological Actions and Clashes) in

    Historia Tou Hellenikou Ethnous 1669-1821 (The History of the Greek Nation), edited

    by Paparrēgopoulos, K., Vol XI, Athens, 1975.

Browning, Robert. "Greek Diglossia Yesterday and Today." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* no. 35, 1982, pp. 49–68.

Cankara, "Rethinking Ottoman Cross-Cultural Encounters: Turks and the Armenian Alphabet," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–16.

Clogg, Richard. "The 'Didaskalia Patriki' (1798): An Orthodox Reaction to French Revolutionary Propaganda." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1969, pp. 87–115.

"The Greek Millet In the Ottoman Empire." *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society,* edited by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis. Holmes & Meier, 1982, pp. 185-207.

Cassin, Barbara et al., eds. *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

Chow, Rey. *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Cündioğlu, Dücane. *Bir Kur'an Şâiri: Mehmed Akif ve Kur'an Meâli*. Istanbul, Bîrun, 2000.

——. *Türkçe Kur'an ve Cumhuriyet İdeolojisi*. Istanbul, Kitabevi, 1998.

——. *Bir Siyasî Proje Olarak Türkçe İbadet*. Istanbul, Kitabevi, 1999.

——. *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Din ve Siyaset*. Istanbul, Kaknüs, 2005.

Çolak, Yılmaz. *"Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey."* Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 40, no. 6, 2004, pp. 67–91.

Davison, Roderic H. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. Princeton University Press, 1963.

Derrida, Jacques. *Monolingualism of the Other, or, the Prosthesis of Origin*. Translated by Patrick Mensah. Stanford University Press, 1998.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by Brian Massumi. New

York: Continuum, 2001.

Dickinson, Kristin. "Where Language Is Ripped Apart: Absence and Illegibility in Bilge

Karasu's *The Garden of Departed Cats." Critical Multilingualism Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1

2014, pp. 106–128.

——. "Zafer Şenocak's "Turkish Turn": Acts of Crosslinguistic Remembrance in Köşk (The

Pavilion)." *New German Critique,* vol. 45, no. 134, 2017, pp. 179–200.

——. *DisOrientations: German-Turkish Cultural Contact in Translation, 1811–1946.*

Pennsylvania University Press, 2021.

Dilaçar, A. *Devlet Dili Olarak Türkçe*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1962.

Dilaçar, Vahe. "Babam Agop Dilaçar." *Bütün Dünya*, 2002, pp. 26-27.

Dimaras, K. T. *A History of Modern Greek Literature.* Translated by Mary P. Gianos. State

University of New York Press, 1972.

——. *Neoellinikos Diafotismos*. (Greek Enlightenment). Athens, Greece: Ermis, 1985.

Dündar, Fuat. *Turkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar.* Istanbul, Doz Yayınları, 1999.

Düzdağ, M. Ertuğrul. *Mehmed Âkif: Mısır Hayatı ve Kur'ân Meâli.* İstanbul, Şule Yayınları,

2003.

Edib, Eşref. *Mehmed Âkif; Hayatı, Eserleri ve Yetmiş Muharririn Yazıları*. Istanbul, Sebilürreşad

Neşriyatı, 1960.

Edmonds, W. A. "Language Reform in Turkey and Its Relevance to Other Areas." *The Muslim

World*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1955, pp. 53–60.

Ekmekçioğlu, Lerna. *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey*.

Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.

Ersoy, Mehmet Akif. *Mehmed Âkif Ersoy'un Kur'ân meâli: Âkif'in kendi el yazısıyla iki cüzlük Meâli.* Istanbul: Büyüyenay, 2016.

——. *Sırâtımüstakim*, vol. 4, edited by Ertuğrul Düzdağ. İstanbul: Bağcılar Belediyesi, 2015

Ertürk, Nergis. "Phonocentrism and Literary Modernity in Turkey." *boundary 2*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2010, pp. 155–185.

Etmekjian, James. *The French Influence on the Western Armenian Renaissance, 1843-1915.* New York, Twayne Publishers, 1964.

——. "Western European and Modem Armenian Literary Relations up to 1915." *Review of National Literatures: Armenia*, edited by A. Paolucci and V. Oshagan, Vol. 13. New York: Griffin House Publications, 1984, pp. 64–92.

Fatani, Afnan H. "Translation and the Qur'an" *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Oliver Leaman, Routledge, 2005, pp. 657–670.

Feldman, Burton, and Robert D. Richardson. *The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680-1860*. Indiana University Press, 1972.

Fortna, Benjamin. *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Fortna, Benjamin C., et al. *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945*. Routledge, 2013.

Galanti, Avram. *Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş! Yahut Türkçe'nin Tamimi Meselesi*. İstanbul: Hüsn-ü Tabiat Matbaası, 1928.

Georgakopoulou, Alexandra, and Michael Silk, editors. *Standard Languages and Language Standards*. London: Ashgate, 2009.

Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Gondicas, Dimitri, and Charles Philip Issawi, editors. *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1999.

Gourgouris, Stathis. *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece*. Stanford University Press, 1996.

——. *Lessons in Secular Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Gökalp, Ziya. *Yeni Hayat: Şiirler*, edited by Salim Çonoğlu, İstanbul: Ötüken, 2015.

——. *Türkçülüğün Esasları,* edited by Mehmet Kaplan, Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1976.

Gramling, David. "The New Cosmopolitan Monolingualism: on Linguistic Citizenship in Twenty-First Century Germany." *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*, vol. 42, no. 2, Fall 2009, pp. 130–140.

——. *The Invention of Monolingualism*. Bloomsbury, 2016.

Gunasti, Susan. *The Qur'an between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic: An Exegetical Tradition*. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.

Gün, Fahrettin. *Sebilürreşad Dergisi Ekseninde Çok Partili Hayata Geçerken İslâmcılara Göre Din, Siyaset ve Lâiklik, 1948-1954*. Istanbul: Beyan Yayınları, 2001.

Gülap, Haldun. *Laiklik, vatandaşlık, demokrasi: Türkiye'nin siyasal kültürü üzerine çalışmalar*. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2018.

Güllü, Fırat. *System Crisis and Theater in the Ottoman Empire: Representation of the Late Ottoman System Crisis in Theatrical Plays*. Istanbul: Libra Books, 2017.

Համայնապատկեր Հանրապետական Շրջանի Իթանպոււահայ Գրականության. Edited by

   Արամեան Սանուց Միութիււն. Istanbul: Varol Basımevi, 2005.

Hanioğlu, Şükrü M. *The Young Turks in Opposition*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

——. *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*. Oxford University Press,

   2001.

——. *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire.* Princeton University Press, 2008.

Hayati, A Majid, and Amir Mashhadi. "Language Planning and Language-in-Education Policy in

   Iran." *Language Problems and Language Planning*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2010, pp. 24–42.

Heyd, Uriel. *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp.*

   London: Luzac, 1950.

——. *Language Reform in Modern Turkey*. Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1954.

Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge

   University Press, 1992.

——. "Language, culture, and national identity." *Social Research*, vol. 63, no. 4, 1996, pp. 1065-

   1080.

Horrocks. *Greek: A History of the Language and Its Speakers*. 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell,

   2010.

Hosni, Abdul Moneim "On Translating the Quran (An Introductory Essay)" *Journal of King

   Saud University,* vol, 2, no. 2, 1990, pp.

İleri, Celal Nuri. *Devlet ve Meclis Hakkında Muhasebeler*. Ankara: TBMM Matbaası, 1932.

İmer, Kamile. *Türkiye'de Dil Planlaması: Türk Dil Devrimi*. Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı,

   1998.

İnalcık, Halil and Donald Quataert, eds. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914,* Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Judson, Pieter M. *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

Jusdanis, Gregory. *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Katartzes, Dimitrios. "Συμβουλή στους νέους πώς να ωφελιούνται και να μη βλάπτουνται απτά βιβλία τα φράγκικα και τα τούρκικα, και ποιά νά 'ναι η καθ' αυτό τους σπουδή." *Ta Euriskomena.* Edited by C. Th. Dimaras. Athens, Greece, Ermis, 1970. pp. 42-71.

Kechriotis, Vangelis. "Postcolonial Criticism Encounters Late Ottoman Studies" *Historein,* no. 13, 2013, pp. 39-46.

Kieser, Hans-Lukas. *Nearest East: American Millenialism and Mission to the Middle East*. Temple University Press, 2010.

Kitromilides, Paschalis. *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosopis Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

——. *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of Southeastern Europe.* Hampshire: Ashgate, 1994.

——. *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Korais, Adamantios. *Asma polemistērion ton en Aigypto eleutherias machomenon graikon*. Athens, Kentron Neoellenikon Ereunon, 1983.

——. *Salpisma Polemisterion.*Athens, Kentron Neoellēnikōn Ereunōn, 1983.

Kuntay, Mithat Cemal. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy: Hayatı-Seciyesi-Sanatı*. Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası

    Kültür Yayınları, 1986.

Lewis, Geoffrey. *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success.* Oxford University

    Press, 1999.

Liakos, Antonis. "Hellenism and the Making of Modern Greece: Time, Langauge, Space."

    Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity, edited by

    Katerina Zaferi, Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008, pp. 201-236.

Mackridge, Peter. *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766-1976*. Oxford University

    Press, 2010.

——. "Korais and the Greek language question," *Adamantios Korais and the European

    Enlightenment*, edited by Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010.

Mahmood, Saba. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. Princeton, NJ:

    Princeton University Press, 2016.

Maraşlı, Recep. "Varlık Vergisi ve Aşkale'nin mimarları Nazilerden ders almış" *Agos* [Istanbul].

    10 March 2012.

Marszałek-Kowalewska, K. "Iranian Language Policy: a Case of Linguistic Purism."

    Investigationes linguiticae, vol. XXII, 2013, pp. 89-103.

Martayan, Hagop. Հաստայնասպատներ Հանրապետական Շրջանի Իսթանպուլահայ

    Գրականութեան. Ed. Արասմեան Սաունց Միութիւն. Istanbul: Varol Basımevi, 2005.

Mufti, Aamir R. "Auerbach in Istanbul." *Critical Inquiry,* vol. 25, no. 1, 1998, pp. 95–125.

——. *Forget English: Orientalisms and World Literature.* Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard

    University Press, 2016.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E. B. Lumbard, and

    Mohammd Rustom, eds. *The Study Quran*. HarperOne, 2015.

Nichanian, Marc. *The Historiographic Perversion*. Translated by Gil Anidjar. Columbia

    University Press, 2009.

——. *Mourning Philology: Art and Religion at the Margins of the Ottoman Empire*. Translated

    by G. M. Goshgarian and Jeff Fort. Fordham University Press, 2014.

Orhon, Orhan Seyfi "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuşma!" *Akbaba*, August 1, 1940, Issue 341.

Özbey, Cemal, *Ibadet Dili: Ezan Türkçe olmalıdır.* Adana, Adana Basım ve Ciltevi, 1969.

Özil, Ayşe. "Ottoman Reform, Non-Muslim Subjects, and Constitutive Legislation: The Reform

    Edict of 1856 and the Greek General Regulations of 1862". *Narrated Empires.*

    Modernity, Memory and Identity in South-East Europe, edited by Chovanec J. and Heilo

    O. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 169-190.

Özkan, Mustafa. *Safahat'ta Konuşma Dili*. Istanbul: Akademik Kitaplar, 2018.

Özil, Ayşe. "Ottoman Reform, Non-Muslim Subjects, and Constitutive Legislation: The Reform

    Edict of 1856 and the Greek General Regulations of 1862." *Narrated Empires.*

    Modernity, Memory and Identity in South-East Europe, edited by J. Chovanec and O.

    Heilo, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 169-190

Parla, Jale. "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the

    Novel." *PMLA* vol 123, no. 1, 2008, pp. 27–40.

Parla, Taha. *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp, 1876-1924*. Leiden: E.J. Brill,

    1985.

Paul, Ludwig. "Iranian Language Reform in the Twentieth Century: Did the First Farhangestān

    (1935-40) Succeed?" *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2010, pp. 78–103.

Perry, John R. "Language Reform in Turkey and Iran." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 03, 1985, pp. 295–311.

Philliou, Christine M. *Biography of an Empire*. University of California Press, 2010.

Pool, Jonathan. "The Official Language Problem." *American Political Science Review,* vol. 85, no. 02, 1991, pp. 495–514.

Poulantzas, Nicos. *State, Power, Socialism*. Verso, 2000.

Poonawala, I.K. "Translatability of the Qur'an: theological and literary considerations" *Translation of Scripture*, edited by David M. Goldenberg, Philadelphia, Anneberg Research Institute, 1990, pp. 161-192.

Poulantzas, Nicos. *State, Power, Socialism*. London: Verso, 2000.

Psichari, Jean. *Un Pays qui ne veut pas de sa langue.* Paris, Imprimerie La Haute-Loire, 1928.

Psichari, J. N. "The Literary Battle in Greece" *The Language Question in Greece*, edited and translated by "Chiensis," Calcutta, India, The Baptist Mission Press, 1902, pp. 27–48.

Psycharis, Ioannis. *To Taxidi Mou*. Athens, Greece, Nefelis, 1988.

——. "My Journey" *Modernism: Representations of National Culture: Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe 1770–1945: Texts and Commentaries, volume III/2,* edited by Ersoy, Ahmet, et al. Translated by Mary Kitroeff. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010, pp. 251-9.

Rahman, Fazlur. "Translating the Qur'an" *Religion and Literature*, 20, no. 1, 1988, pp. 23–30.

Robbins, Bruce. "Secularism, Elitism, Progress, and Other Transgressions: On Edward Said's 'Voyage In,'" *Social Text*, no. 40, Fall 1994, pp. 25-38.

Roudometof, Victor. "From Rum Millet to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and

    National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society, 1453–1821" *Journal of Modern Greek*

    Studies, vol. 16, no. 1, May 1998, pp. 11–48.

Safa, Peyami. *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Uydurmaca*. Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 1999.

Sadeghi, Ali Ashraf. "Language Planning in Iran: a Historical Review." *International Journal of*

    the Sociology of Language, vol. 2001, no. 148, 2001, pp. 1–12.

Said, Edward. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Harvard University Press, 1983.

Sarıhan, Zeki. *Mehmet Akif*. Istanbul, Kaynak Yayınları, 1996.

Sıtkı, Ahmet Refık. *Kozmopolitlikle Mücadele ve Dil Meselesi.* Samsun, Turkey, Şems Matbaası,

    1932.

Spector, Scott. *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Kafka's Fin de*

    Siècle. University of California Press, 2000.

Spivak, Gayatri C. *Death of a Discipline.* Columbia University Press, 2003

Stamatopoulos, Dimitri. "From Millets to Minorities in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire:

    Am Ambiguous Modernization." *Citizenship in Historical Perspective*, edited by S. G.

    Ellis, G. Hálfadanarson, and A. K. Isaacs. Pisa, Italy, Edzioni Plus-Pisa University Press,

    2006, pp. 253–73.

——. "From Cratylus to Herder: Dimensions of the Language Question in the Ottoman Empire

    (Late 19th Century)." In *Language, Society, History: the Balkans*, edited by A.F.

    Christidis et. al. Thessaloniki, Greece: Centre for the Greek Language, 2007, pp. 253-

    264.

Stepanyan. *Hayadaṙ tʿurkʿerēn krkʿeri ew hayadaṙ tʿurkʿerēn barperagan mamuli*

    madenakidutʿiwn; Ermeni Harfli Türkçe Kitaplar ve Süreli Yayınlar Bibliografyası (1727

– 1968); Bibliographie des livres et de la presse Armeno-Turque (1727-1968), Istanbul: Turkuaz Yayınları, 2005.

Strauss, Johann. "Who read what in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th centuries)?" *Arabic Middle Eastern Literatures,* vol. 6, no. 1, 2003, pp. 39–76.

——. "The Greek Connection in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Intellectual History." *Greece and the Balkans*, edited by Dimitri Tziovas. London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 47–67.

Suciyan, Talin. *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics, and History.* London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016.

Şavkay, Tuğrul. *Dil Devrimi*. İstanbul: Gelenek Yayınları, 2002.

Şentürk, Recep. Direnen Meal, Akif Meali. Istanbul: Mahya Yayınları, 2016.

Şimşir, Bilal N. *Türk Yazı Devrimi*. Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992.

Tachau, Frank. "Language and Politics: Turkish Language Reform." *The Review of Politics* vol. 26, no. 02, 1964, pp. 191–204.

"The Ottoman Constitution, Promulgated the 7th Zilbridje, 1293 (11/23 December, 1876)." *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 2, no. S4, 1908, pp. 367–387.

Turnaoğlu, Banu. *The Formation of Turkish Republicanism*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

Türkay, Kaya. *A. Dilâçar*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1982.

Türk Ocakları Üçüncü Kurultay Zabıtları, 1926.

Tziovas, Dimitris. *The Other Self: Selfhood and Society in Modern Greek Fiction*. Lexington Books, 2003.

Ülkütaşır, M. Şakir. *Atatürk ve Harf Devrimi*. Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2009.

Vassiadis, George A. *The* Syllogos *Movement of Constantinople and Ottoman Greek Education 1861-1923*. Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 2007.

Vizyenos, Georgios. *Moskov Selim*. Translated by Peter Mackridge, Athens, Greece: Aiōra, 2015.

——. *My Mother's Sin and Other Stories*. Translated by William F. Wyatt, Jr., Published for Brown University Press by University Press of New England, 1988.

——. *Thracian Tales*. Translated by Peter Mackridge. Athens, Greece: Aiōra, 2014

Von Hendy, Andrew. *The Modern Construction of Myth*. Indiana University Press, 2002.

Yılmaz, Hale. *Becoming Turkish*: *Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945*. Syracuse University Press, 2013.

Yildiz, Yasemin. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*, Fordham University Press, 2012.

Yücel, Tahsin. *Dil Devrimi ve Sonuçları*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1982.

Wilson, Brett. *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Woolard, Kathyrn A., and Bambi B. Schieffelin. "Language Ideology." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1994, pp. 55–82.