

A Panoramic Look at Turkish Fiction

For over a century, ambivalence has been what best defines Turkey's relation to Europe. Since the institutional and social realms which started in the late Ottoman era and continued through the Republican period, Turkish modernization have been driven by European ideals; but Europe has been associated with a conflictual image which illustrates its very essence both as a model to be fully embraced and a threat to the moral and national values. This dualistic mind-set still operates powerfully today, when a date to start negotiations for full membership is expected in December 2004 from European Union. The long history of Turkey's attempts to enter EU certainly deserves deeper analyses in sociopolitical contexts, what is offered in this essay is a panoramic look at Turkish fiction, which since its very beginning, has been dealing with this dualistic mechanism that constructs a conflictual image of Europe. The goal of this essay is twofold: to engage the reader to the prominent literary figures of Turkey and to serve as a perspective and an appetizer in the fields of Turkish novel and short-story, which may be instrumental to shed light to Turkish identity and its links to European culture.

Confrontations with self and the other have been relatively better developed themes in the works of writers who experience a traumatic encounter with some other culture. Not only literatures of colonized cultures but also works of several grand writers like Kafka, Dostoevsky etc. are characterized with a stunning introspection which stems from ambivalences in identity on social or national grounds. Several works of Turkish fiction incorporate such a challenge which also stunningly echoes in the inner worlds of the personages. They explore, both the individual and the social accounts of a manipulated change, crafted identities and imitation as a problematic life style. However, unlike its counterparts, Turkish fiction have gained a very limited Western readership, which is being only recently challenged by an increasing curiosity about Turkish arts and culture.

In the limits of an introductory essay, I aim to shed light to the works of the foremost writers of Turkey who have captivated readers worldwide and been praised with major awards, as a partial fulfillment to this curiosity. For this purpose, the initial part of this essay will slightly touch the Ottoman period, starting from the importation of literary genres like novel and short-story to the Ottoman literary milieu in the Tanzimat (Reforms) period (1839-1876) and cover the accumulation of literary interest on national ideals in the outset of the proclamation of the Turkish nation-state in 1923. Moving to socialism inspired literature of 30s, I will trace the emergence of the peasantist discourse in 40s and comment on the adoption of individualist perspectives in the literature of 50s. The latter part will more squarely deal with the 1960-1980 period in which Turkey experienced three military interventions and witnessed the rise of different perspectives in literature. Speculations on where fiction in Turkey is headed in the post-80 period will serve as concluding remarks.

Echoes of Identity Trouble in Fiction

An identity paradox settled on an East-West conflict, East referring to the genuine Ottoman values and West representing the Europe, becomes expressly visible in the agenda of the literary figures in the 19th century due to the increasing contact with Western civilization. The emergence of such a theme corresponds to the importation of several institutions and adoption of literary genres of European origin like novel, drama and short-story in the reformist aura of the Tanzimat period. Accepted as an integral part of catching up with Western civilization, new genres provided the platform for the illustration of probable ways of adopting Western manners without losing the indigenous qualities of Ottoman culture¹. Tanzimat novelists contrasted the socio-cultural aspects of the Ottoman and the European manners utilizing themes like slavery, household relations, custom

arranged marriages, education and speculated on the limits of Westernization with an instructive discourse in their works².

Although the pioneering novels were modeled on European examples, those particularly French in origin, they included certain elements from the traditional oral folk narratives, the narrations tailored during the one-man improvised shows of the so-called “meddah”s, Islamic romances (mesnevi's) and the classical Ottoman poetry as well³. The transition to novel benefited immensely from the narrative techniques of heroic and romantic folk tales and the humorous elements that regional figures of speech and local dialects introduce to the meddah stories. These elements were also operative in short-stories which have been tightly connected to Eastern storytelling traditions both in their concept and style. Sami Paşazade Sezai's Küçük Şeyler (Little Things, 1891) appears to be the sole example that resembles the European type short-story in the Ottoman period; Ahmet Midhat's Kissadan Hisse (Lesson from the Tale, 1870) and Letaif-i Rivayat (Elegance of Stories, 1871-1893), Emin Nihad's Müsameretname (Night Tales, 1871-75) and Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi's Amak-ı Hayal (Depths of Dreams, 1910) have stronger links with Eastern narrative traditions than the European ones.

Due to strict censorship, it was difficult to refer to historical and political figures and conflicts in literature during Tanzimat period; therefore, fiction remained more as a means of discussion of cultural polemics. In the post-Tanzimat period, the instructive discourse of the pioneering novels is challenged by a new circle of writers assembled around the Servet-i Fünun (The Treasury of Sciences) journal; the so-called Edebiyat-ı Cedide (New Literature) group, who with their apparent admiration to the West, abandoned satirizing Westernized upper-classes and shifted the literary concern from cosmetic elements or attitudes of the Westernizing people to the psychological issues. Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil and Mehmet Rauf, two prominent writers of the group, took psychological conflicts, love affairs, disappointments and illusions of individuals as literary themes and explored the inner worlds of personages as the founding elements of identity. In their works, traces of problematization of gender identity and class hierarchies became visible within the territories of the household of upper-class families. Uşaklıgil's Aşk-ı Memnu (Illicit Love, 1900) which portrays the tragic end of a love affair of an outstanding heroine Bihter, who marries for wealth but soon discovers her bodily passions as she falls in love with the niece of her husband, makes an opening to various faces of identity with the critical eye of the household servants on this “perverse” life. Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, another well-known writer of the period, who includes his concerns on social issues and injustice more explicitly than Uşaklıgil in the limits of the censorship, also offers an elementary discussion on class-based identities in his novels.

With the culmination of nationalistic ideologies throughout the non-Muslim and non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire, the nature of the paradox of identity drastically changed. In the aftermath of the bloodless Young Turk Revolution, the literary circles in Salonika initiated a journal called Genç Kalemler (Young Pens) in 1911, which began to transform literature radically in the lights of Turkish nationalism. Once built around loyalty to the Ottoman Empire as a nation, the identity advocated by works of fiction is constructed around national premises, overrunning other significant elements like gender and class. Young Pens voiced an ideological and stylistic rebel against the Fecr-i Ati (Dawn of the Future) group, the heir to Edebiyat-ı Cedide, in terms of the use and the linguistic features of literature⁴. The motto "art for art's sake" of the Fecr-i Ati is challenged by Young Pens that favored social and national concerns in literature and advocated a national literature with a vernacular Turkish which no longer bears Arabic and Persian words.

Contradictory as it may seem, it was an intellectual with a Kurdish background whose role as “the father of Turkish nationalism” is initiated by his writings in Young Pens. Ziya Gökalp, the most

important name behind the journal, discussed how civilization becomes a matter of mechanical imitation when it lacks a cultural basis and tried to achieve a reliable unity of European civilization and Turkish culture, proposing the ancient Turkish culture prior to Islam as the key to the source of unique cultural values⁵. Several writers including Ömer Seyfettin and Ahmet Hikmet Müftüoğlu, two of the influential members of the Young Pens, inspected the terms Ottoman-Turk and the concepts like nation and nationality in their literary works, inspired by the theories of Gökalp. Although she was not associated with the Young Pens, Halide Edip Adivar was also an influential writer among the Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths), the organizations which embraced Turanism, a pan-Turkist approach⁶.

Offering the authentic national character of Turkish people as an answer to the long lasting identity crisis since Tanzimat marked an important re-orientation in Turkish literature. To find about the indigenous Turkish values, literary interest is set out from the Ottoman capital to the villages of Anatolia. Ömer Seyfettin's Yalnız Efe (The Lonesome Lad,1910) and Refik Halit Karay's Memleket Hikayeleri (Homeland Stories,1919) are the pioneering works of this opening to the long-ignored destinations. In the outset of the WW1, the quest for a national literature became the main drive of literary enterprise. Literary works published during war time fictionalized the mistreatment by invaders and the disintegration of the society due to the trauma. The identity split Ottoman/Turk incorporated further social divisions based on educational and religious grounds in these novels as the elite perceptions of rural life emphasized the dissonance between the well-educated İstanbul elite and the unschooled Anatolian masses⁷.

The confrontation of the society with the two faces of the West, one as an opponent in the war and the other as a model for progress is depicted in the numerous works of writers like Halide Edip Adivar, Reşat Nuri Güntekin and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu who attacked religious conservatism, praised modern conceptions of life and vindicated the goals of the new Turkish state in their novels. They attempted to introduce a common Turkish identity beyond the individual ethnic identities by expressing a collective consciousness against Western invasion. New definitions of femininity and masculinity are constructed through nationalist ideals in these works. Adivar, who during the War of Liberation served as a nurse for the troops and a press secretary for Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the independence movement, made imminent use of her observations during the war in her novels which substantially consisted female characters as the forerunners of the patriotic feelings. Likewise, Güntekin gained literary prominence with Çalılıkusu (The Wren,1922) in which the heroine was a young and idealist teacher. Karaosmanoğlu, who gave the patriot role extensively to male figures and portrayed women rather foppish and indifferent to social struggles, explored the engagement of the İstanbul elite with national ideals through a period of maturation in his popular novels Kiralık Konak (Mansion for Rent,1922) and Sodom ve Gomora (Sodom and Gomorra,1928).

Proclamation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 is followed by several reforms to guarantee the secular and modernizing quality of the new state, of which the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928 was one of the radical ones. The estrangement introduced by the drastic reforms recalled the discussions about the limits of Westernization in the literary agenda of 30s. Güntekin illustrated the collapse of moral values and the disintegration of the family unit as a result of a foppish Westernism in his Yaprak Dökümü (Fall of Leaves,1930) and Peyami Safa depicted the cultural split in his Fatih-Harbiye (Fatih-Harbiye,1931) utilizing the neighborhoods of İstanbul as representations of Eastern and Western socio-cultural identities. 30s also witnessed the initiation of a critical look at the Republican ideals; Karaosmanoğlu published Yaban (The Outlander,1932) in which he casted an eye on the level of progress of the Republican reforms, placing the emphasis on the unreached goal of social cohesion on national and progressive grounds. Adivar, who after becoming a political opponent of Mustafa Kemal found herself in a self-imposed exile in the United Kingdom, published Sinekli

Bakkal (The Clown and His Daughter, 1935) a novel originally written in English in which social evolution is advocated as a more favorable solution over revolution.

As the disappointment about the unreached goals of the Republican regime grew bigger, many writers adopted a protest tone in accompany of social commentary in their works. The economical aspects beneath the backwardness became a major discussion. It is with the critical perspectives they introduced to the literature that formed a different ground of interpretation for the problem of identity. Sadri Ertem, Suat Derviş, Mahmut Yesari, Reşat Enis Aygen, Sabahattin Ali, Orhan Kemal and Kemal Tahir raised the issue of class struggle both in terms of the peasants and workers as the underrepresented segments of the society and cultivated a social(ist)-realist fiction in Turkey starting from late 30s⁸. It is with the emergence of a socialism inspired literature that mainstream literary interest shifted the focus to the material aspects beneath the exploitation of masses. As social realism nurtured discussions on social injustice and material conflicts, class based identities settled on the nexus of fiction. In this aura, struggles of ordinary people became an important theme in short-story. The prominent short-story writers of 30s, Sait Faik Abasıyanık, Memduh Şevket Esendal and Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı focused on the struggles of common men and women introducing fresh horizons to Turkish short-story.

In 40s Turkish fiction experienced a diversification in terms of its subject matter. Several writers summoned the Ottoman times in their works with melancholy. Abdülhak Şinasi Hisar and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar focused on people who fail to catch up with the rapid change of their times within the nostalgic aura of mourning for the destruction of traditional values under West-oriented policies. Hisar in his Fahim Bey ve Biz (Mr. Fahim and Us, 1941) depicted the struggles of an upper-class İstanbul gentleman with Ottoman sensibilities and Tanpınar illustrated the desire for change and the self-reflexive attitude it arises in his prominent novel Huzur (Peace of Mind, 1949). Tanpınar's treatment of the problem of change however was not limited with melancholy; his short-stories gathered under the title Abdullah Efendi'nin Rüyaları (Dreams of Abdullah Efendi, 1943) and his novel Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü (The Clock Setting Institute, 1963) also provide interesting insights to the intrapsychic world of the modernizing persona⁹. Meanwhile, popular romance flourished with the works of Kerime Nadir, Mahmut Karakurt, Muazzez Tahsin Berkant etc. securing a limited space for female writers in Turkish fiction.

Following the establishment of Village Institutes in 1940, a considerable number of writers of rural origin showed up in the literary arena. A peasantist discourse that pinpointed the feudal village life and the struggles of the peasants is triggered by the graduates of the Village Institutes most of whom made their first appearances in the official journal of the Institute¹⁰. Lacking the elitist look of the previous writers to village life, these writers provided simple accounts of the overlooked realities of the country. In 1950, Mahmut Makal, a Village Institute graduate, published his documentary notes on an anonymous Anatolian village under the title Bizim Köy (Our Village). Makal's plain observations of backwardness and illiteracy initiated a hot debate about the literary approach to the Anatolian villages. Following Bizim Köy, the idealistic image of rural life as the governor of indigenous Turkish values is gradually replaced with more realistic images. Some other writers like Mehmet Başaran, Talip Apaydın, Dursun Akçam, Fakir Baykurt, Kemal Bilbaşar, Samim Kocagöz, Necati Cumalı and Yaşar Kemal also focused on the struggles of Anatolian villagers in their prize winning novels and short-stories which served as a mouthpiece for the rural masses. Kemal is one of the distinguished names of this movement who, fusing his observations with artistic elaborations, illustrated the village life with a lyric language; his İnce Memed (Memed My Hawk, 1955), the story of the rebellion of a young peasant to the covetous landlord is one of the books that broke the record of sales in Turkey and translated to various languages worldwide¹¹.

Individual Perspectives in Fiction:

The emergence of a younger generation of writers, the so-called generation of 1950, with works anchored in the individual marked a pivotal movement in the development of Turkish fiction¹². Vüsat O. Bener, Demir Özlü, Ferit Edgü, Orhan Duru, Yusuf Atılgan, Bilge Karasu and Tahsin Yücel, who began to write between the years 1950-1960, contributed to a new surge in Turkish fiction, influenced by individualism and existentialism. The identity problem is distanced from class orientations and settled on the inner struggles of the individual in the works of the 1950 generation.

Bener's first success came with Dost (Ally, 1952) which associated stories of isolated individuals who attempt to overcome their solitude with fantasies. Özlü and Edgü focused on urban identities and explored the existential question of being in their short-stories and novels, illustrating the skepticism of urban persona and the growth of his mistrust to people. Duru, who made eminent use of fantastic elements in his stories, published pioneering examples of science-fiction in Turkish literature. Atılgan revealed the societal pressure on individuals in his novel Aylak Adam (Flaneur, 1959) and developed this theme in his further works. Karasu, who focused on male intimacy in his Troya'da Ölüm Vardı (Death in Troy, 1963) explored gender trouble as a part of the sorrowful solitude of the urban persona. Yücel, who in their early works made use of his childhood memories in a township, developed an acute psychological analysis of contemporary man and the crisis of his values in his later works. Nezihe Meriç and Leyla Erbil, the female writers associated with this new surge, concentrated on the female characters who have been living under the overwhelming tensions of several repressive apparatus and explored critically the social bonds of individuals. Various values expressed in the works of this generation of writers like free will, individual essence etc. influenced the following generations and raised a specific literary concern on the individual.

By 60s the internal migration to big cities and the problem of cultural compatibility became popular themes in novels dealing with peasants. Writers such as Orhan Kemal, Yaşar Kemal and Kemal Tahir illustrated the tragic results of the mechanization of agriculture and revealed in their novels the immigration to big cities for better conditions and work. Orhan Kemal became a prominent name in short-story illustrating a variety of figures from Çukurova's brutal land owners and repressed peasants to the blue collars stuck in governmental offices. Kemal Tahir, who worked on the theory of a unique Turkish novel along his literary career, published Devlet Ana (State Mother, 1967) a novel initiated hot discussions on the prospects of Turkish fiction.

In the period 1960-80, Turkey experienced three military take-overs, each of which had deep impacts on the society. Following the first military coup in 27 May 1960, mainstream literary interest concentrated on social themes that illustrate the widening gap between the segments of the society. Orhan Kemal's Hanımın Çiftliği (Farm of the Lady, 1961) and Suat Derviş's Aksaray'dan Bir Perihan (A Perihan from Aksaray, 1964) are popular examples of the politically charged fiction of the 60s which depict the rise of a money hungry bourgeois class and the moral corruption of the underprivileged people who have to compete in various ways for a better quality of life. Aziz Nesin's Zübük (Zübük, 1961) successfully illustrates the contamination of the profession of politics and satirizes the ills of the society. The literary concern in the individual developed in the works of writers like Sevim Burak and Tomris Uyar who started publishing by mid-60s. Burak published Yanık Saraylar (Burnt Palaces) her first collection of surreal short-stories anchored in the levantine culture of İstanbul in 1965 when the pioneering works of Tomris Uyar started to appear in literary journals. Selim İleri also focused on the rich inner world of individuals destined to poor, underprivileged and helpless lives in his stories.

In the outset of 70s Oğuz Atay won the prestigious TRT literary prize with his first novel

Tutunamayanlar (The Disconnected, 1970) which comprises a whole literary epoch in itself. The central theme of Atay's writing was the search for identity, a search that he sees as central to Turkish life. In Tutunamayanlar, Atay recalled the East-West conflict in an ironical way, satirized the military flavored bureaucracy, the education system, the elitist look of the intellectuals and revealed the problem of identity of the Turkish persona within the struggles of a lonely little-bourgeois intellectual with a high-spirited irony and sarcasm¹³. These themes inspired Atay in his following novels and short stories as well but his work evoked scant attention during his lifetime. Following Atay's obtaining a mass readership in late 70s, the mainstream fiction casted a critical eye on the identity problem focusing more squarely on the conflicts of the urban persona and the little bourgeois individual.

The second military intervention in 12 March 1970 initiated a brand new politically charged discourse in fiction which attempted to explore the dynamics of power in the settings of the coup d'état. These works depicted the human dimensions of the political upheavals within testimonial accounts. The majority of the novels dealing with the period were written as an immediate reaction by the eye-witnesses of the intervention, who under the changing nature of their civil rights and political freedom experienced a trauma, as the state which is supposed to serve people became a means to accumulate power in the hands of the powerful. Writers like Çetin Altan, Erdal Öz, Pınar Kür, Füzûzan, Sevgi Soysal, Adalet Ağaoğlu and Ayla Kutlu revealed various aspects of the political polarization of the society and the sociopolitical transformation of 1970s under the repressive measures of the military rule in their works. Despite the fact that March 12 novels consisted extensively of a discourse of the left, there were several novels informed with the counter-arguments of the right that attempt to challenge the victim/witness role, published by writers like Tarık Buğra, Sevinç Çokum and Emine Işınsoy. March 12 narratives made the political aspects of identity a very powerful center of gravity. The socio-political accounts of the first military intervention are also revealed after a considerable time in 70s, in the works of Samim Kocagöz, Vedat Türkali, Atilla İlhan etc.; Türkali and İlhan kept an active interest in the political and successfully combined historical and political accounts with the personal and psychological in their works.

A gender sensitive discourse became more clearly visible in 70s as the awakening of gender consciousness is pinned to an awakening in political consciousness. Several female writers appeared at the forefront of Turkish literature concentrating on the dynamics of power considering gender roles and sexuality in the conflictual social and political contexts¹⁴. They explored both masculinity and femininity with a critical eye. Their works manifested a rebellion against the discourses of sexuality adopted by the male oriented literary circles as women, from being defenseless objects of male desire, are transferred into investigators and critics of this desire. Leyla Erbil was the forerunner of this surge; her Tuhaf Bir Kadın (A Strange Woman, 1971) portrayed a young woman of high self-esteem who confronts the male-dominated left wing intelligentsia and the society on various grounds.

Tomris Uyar, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Pınar Kür, Sevgi Soysal, İnci Aral and Tezer Özlü were some other writers of this distinctive trait who in their numerous works dealt with the feminist identity introduced by the Republican regime, traditional values like virginity and family reputation, sexual humiliation of women etc. Uyar investigated personal traumas in her stories with a critical approach to the conventional life styles. Ağaoğlu gained literary prominence with her Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die, 1973) which provides a panoramic account of the socio-political history of Turkey from the Republican times to the 70s from the viewpoint of a female academician. Soysal and Kür adopted an explicit discourse of sexuality in their works and faced juridical charges of obscenity for the taboo-breaking expressions they employed¹⁵. Aral made her debut with her short-stories published under the title Ağda Zamanı (Time to Wax, 1979) and Özlü attracted attention with her Çocukluğun Soğuk Geceleeri (Chilly Nights of Childhood, 1980) both of which more squarely focus on the isolation and

solitude of the female individual. Islamist female writers responded to the emancipated figures of femininity with more conservatist figures; Şule Yüksel Şenler, Emine Şenlikoğlu, Sevim Asımgil etc. published several novels advocating an Islamic life-style both for men and women, starting from 70s.

In 1975, Nedim Gürsel, two early books of whom were censored under military rule, published Uzun Sürmüş Bir Yaz (A Summer without End) a collection of short-stories illustrating the repressive atmosphere of the coup d'état. Another prolific writer, Nazlı Eray collected her challenging stories that combine small details of everyday life with the fantastic in Ah Bayım Ah (Oh Mister Oh). Following the third military coup in 1980, literature in Turkey gradually distanced itself from politics. Accounts of this last coup did not echo in a compact corpus of novels but dissolved in several works which are scattered in the post-80 period. Bilge Karasu's Pegasus Prize-winning Gece (Night,1985) provides an insight about life in a world of repression, violence, paranoia and alienation, Orhan Pamuk's 1984 Madaralı Novel Prize winner novel Sessiz Ev (Silent House,1983) which also won the 1991 Prix de la Découverte Européenne with the French translation, reveals the wake of the coup within the tensions of the familial bonds of an upper-class İstanbul family and Oya Baydar deals with political accounts of power in her Sıcak Külleri Kaldı (Hot Ashes Left, 2000).

Post-80s in Turkey witnessed the rise of a post-modernist literature which privileged fragmented discourse, discontinuity, fantasy, and multiplicity. Texts which violate linear narrative logic and favor narrational elements over plot became visible. Mainstream literary interest accumulated on the individual, intrapsychic matters and new techniques of writing while several writers like Vedat Türkali, Mehmet Eroğlu, Oya Baydar etc. kept socio-political links of the individual at their explicit focus. Among those who started publishing in 80s, there are several writers whose works are recognized as finest achievements of Turkish literature. Latife Tekin, who is one of the writers that challenged the realistic modes of expression in the mainstream fiction utilizing surreal elements and post-modernist techniques, made her debut by Sevgili Arsız Ölüm (Dear Shameless Death,1983) interweaving songs and folk stories within the fantastic settings of a village. Orhan Pamuk published Beyaz Kale (The White Castle,1985), a postmodern novel which in the settings of the 16th century İstanbul narrates the confrontation of a Venetian slave with his Ottoman master.

Murathan Mungan in his short-stories and plays delineated how identities whether ethnic, religious or sexual can become a prison; it is with his work that queer identities settled at the focus of literary enterprise more explicitly. Cemil Kavukçu in his short-stories explored the life in the self-built prisons of little towns and portrayed the tragedies of common people who have to cope with the restrictions of the predominantly traditional society. Hasan Ali Toptaş focused on the problem of identity delineating the loss of stability in his novels; his work opens to a challenging perspective of alienation in the big cities, which from the problem of social compatibility moves to the instability of the self.

Buket Uzuner and Erendiz Atasü, who also made their debut in 80s, more squarely dealt with women's self-built prisons. Uzuner's stories and novels include the feminist consciousness she raised during her studies abroad as a woman scientist engaged with a relatively male area of scholarship. With a background in pharmaceutical science, Atasü adopts a similar feminist sensitivity in her work and traces the continuity and change in the generations of the Republic with women and their affinities at her explicit focus. A similar history of generations can be observed in Ayla Kutlu's Bir Göçmen Kuştı O (A Migrant Bird Was She,1985). Ağaoğlu also provided a personal history keeping the accounts of her female academician of Ölmeye Yatmak in Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding Party,1979) and Hayır (No,1987)¹⁶.

By 90's some genres which have been only scarcely present in Turkish literature like thrillers and science fiction flourished as the post-modern arguments about the instability of self and

multiplicity of identities cultivated a literary interest in the dark sides of human nature. Crime, from an illustrative feature of mysterious plots is transferred to the nexus of a specific genre. Crime stories and hard-boiled detective fiction became popular with the works of Ahmet Ümit, Sadık Yemni, Celil Öker etc. Horrors of urban life inspired many writers of young generations, who concentrated on the underground settings in the big cities and explored the demonic sides of human nature. Metin Kaçan published Ağır Roman (Cholera Blues,1990) in which he illustrated the peripheral lives in the poor suburbs with an unfamiliar local language full of slang. Şebnem İşigüzel attracted attention with her stories published under the title Hanene Ay Doğacak (Bliss Will Befall Your Household,1993) in which crime and violence are transferred to simple and usual realities of life.

Science fiction, which has been accepted more as a part of junior libraries until recent times, received widespread notice as several writers like Müfit Özdeş, Haldun Aydıngün, Barış Müstecaplıoğlu etc. started publishing their works. Mystery has also been the main ingredient of novels anchored in history which emerged towards the turn of the century like İhsan Oktay Anar's Puslu Kıtalar Atlası (The Atlas of Misty Continents,1995), Nedim Gürsel's Boğazkesen: Fatih'in Romanı (Cut-Throat: The Story of Mehmet the Conqueror,1997), Ahmet Altan's Kılıç Yarası Gibi (Like a Sword's Wound,1998) and Orhan Pamuk's Benim Adım Kırmızı (My Name is Red,1998). The English version of Benim Adım Kırmızı brought the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award to Pamuk in 2003 and translated to many languages worldwide.

It is not only works of well-established novelists and short-story writers that contribute to recent developments in fiction but many emerging writers also produce outstanding work. A number of innovative contemporary writers like Sema Kaygusuz, Ayfer Tunç, Müge İplikçi, Suzan Samancı, Ahmet Karcılılar, Murat Gülsoy, Hakan Şenocak, and Attila Şenkon continue to concentrate on short-story despite the considerably greater commercial viability of the novel. Kaan Arslanoğlu, Aslı Erdoğan, Elif Şafak, Tuna Kiremitçi, Murat Uyrukulak, Hakan Günday are among the members of the new generation of writers who receive widespread notice with their novels. Contemporary fiction in Turkey is characterized by the works of these writers whose work represent a wide ideological and artistic spectrum formed by different interpretations of literature.

Current Trends in Fiction:

Within the current panorama, it is hard to speculate on where fiction in Turkey is headed to since it resembles a patchwork of totally different styles and perspectives and gets more and more diversified in its subject matter and style everyday. Fiction today inscribes a double gesture; on the one hand, it pretends to satisfy readerly expectations and narrative conventions on the other, it inverts the reliability of the authorial voices, employing competing viewpoints and engaging the reader more actively in the construction of meaning. There are writers who choose worldwide settings and attempt to write global stories and there are those who keep a keen interest on the local occasions, political conflicts, and history to put the Turkish flavor to fiction.

It is apparent that successive military interventions forced a softening in the protest tone fiction in Turkey once adopted, but it seems that narrations still keep a particular engagement with socio-political events and conflicts, ask questions, and criticize if not protest. In the recent works, the literary engagement with the social and political is initiated within more complex narrative strategies. Thus, it can be said that reflecting social reality or conflicts is no longer a major task, but it is also not a totally abandoned point of interest, although the task of narrating trustworthy stories is getting replaced with an experimentation of discourses.

Some genres like village novels may be said to become extinct; Anatolian peasants are no more a collective attraction in literature but the literary interest in the subaltern continues to operate in

narrations which focus on townships, suburbs and peripheral lives. In this vein, the focus has also been widened to include subaltern groups like children, people of different ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations etc. Gender issues remain among the major topics in 21st century fiction, and more works are being published bringing such concerns into focus.

The literature of the Turkish diaspora is in development since 70s, to which several people who took up residence in European countries after the 1980 intervention made important contributions¹⁷. Cross-cultural perspectives in the works of such writers provide new horizons as well. Their work is as important as literary works produced within Turkey, to observe the ambivalences of the destination of Turks to Europe. As the literature of the new century is being shaped, Turkish fiction shares a common ground with literatures worldwide in responding to the important issues of the world and the questions of the mankind.

- ¹Evin, A. *Origins and The Development of Turkish Novel*. Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983.
- ²Among the pioneering novelists, there were Namık Kemal, Ahmet Midhat, Sami Paşazade Sezai, Nabizade Nazım, Emin Nihad, Mizancı Murat and Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem.
- ³Finn, R. *The Early Turkish Novel*. İstanbul: Isis Press, 1984.
- ⁴The Fecr-i Ati group was consisting of Ahmet Haşim, Fuad Köprülü, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Hamdullah Suphi.
- ⁵Kadioğlu, A. "The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity." *MiddleEastern Studies* 2 (April 1996): 177-194.
- ⁶Köksal, D. "Nationalist Theory in the Writings of Halide Edib." *TSA Bulletin* 17 (1993): 80-91.
- ⁷Karaömerlioğlu, A. "The Peasants in Early Turkish Literature." *East European Quarterly*. 2 (2002)127-153.
- ⁸Tatarlı, İ. "Some Remarks on the Rise and the Development of Socialist Realism in Turkish Literature." *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Theoretical Problems of Asian and African Literatures*. Ed: Marián Gálik. Bratislava: Literary Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1983. 338-346.
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